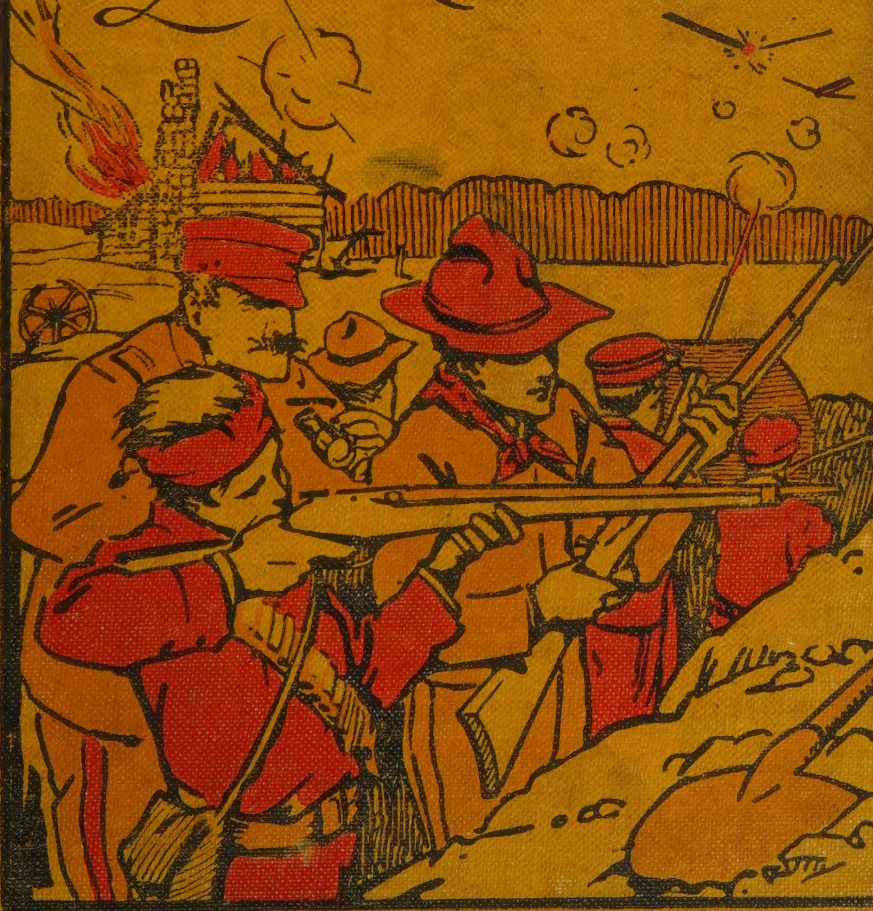
THE BOY ALLIES UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES

By Clair W. Hayes



Lester J. Prince Jr

Prize Book from

Holy Rosary School

June 1921

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The German machine, freed of a guiding hand, turned about crazily once or twice, and then plunged after the pilot. Page 25.
"The Boy Allies Under the Stars and Stripes"

The Boy Allies

UNDER THE

Stars and Stripes

OR

Leading the American Troops
to the Firing Line

By CLAIR W. HAYES

AUTHOR OF

"The Boy Allies with the Army Series"

A. L. BURT COMPANY
NEW YORK

THE BOY ALLIES

(Registered in the United States Patent Office)

WITH THE ARMY SERIES

By Clair W. Hayes

The Boy Allies at Liege
or, Through Lines of Steel

The Boy Allies on the Firing Line
or, Twelve Days Battle along the Marne

The Boy Allies with the Cossacks
or, A Wild Dash over the Carpathians

The Boy Allies in the Trenches
or, Midst Shot and Shell along the Aisne

The Boy Allies in Great Peril
or, With the Italian Army in the Alps

The Boy Allies in the Balkan Campaign
or, The Struggle to Save a Nation

The Boy Allies on the Somme
or, Courage and Bravery Rewarded

The Boy Allies at Verdun
or, Saving France from the Enemy

The Boy Allies under the Stars and Stripes
or, Leading the American Troops to the Firing Line

The Boy Allies with Haig in Flanders
or, The Fighting Canadians of Vimy Ridge

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THE BOY ALLIES UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES

THE BOY ALLIES UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES

CHAPTER I

THE EAGLE SCREAMS

"GET up, Hal! Get up!"

The speaker was Chester Crawford.

Hal Paine turned over on his cot. He rubbed drowsy eyes with the knuckles of one hand and then stared up at his chum in the semi-darkness of the tent.

"What's the idea of waking a fellow up in the middle of the night?" he wanted to know. "Have the Germans attacked, or has General Haig ordered an advance?"

"Better than that," cried Chester excitedly, answering Hal's last question. "I've got the greatest piece of news in the world. Guess what it is."

"Uncle Sam has declared war on the Kaiser?" guessed Hal.

Chester's face fell a trifle.

"How did you happen to guess that?" he demanded.

"Why," said Hal. "I consider that the best piece of news that could possibly come to my ears right now. Did I guess right?"

"You did," responded Chester briefly.

Hal jumped from his bed and executed a dance of joy about the tent.

"Hurrah!" he shouted. "I had no idea that was your piece of news when I guessed, or I would have been out of bed the minute you came in the tent. So Uncle Sam has declared war at last, eh?"

"He has," replied Chester, "and you can bet that these Germans will realize they are on their last legs when they hear of it."

"When was war declared?" asked Hal.

"Last night," replied Chester. "The sixth day of April will go down in history as one of the most momentous dates of all time. I don't mean last night, either, exactly. It was yesterday afternoon at 1:13 o'clock, but that's the way the news came to me. President Wilson signed the resolution declaring that a state of war existed with the Imperial German government at that hour."

"Well, it was about time," said Hal. "I don't understand why war wasn't declared a long while ago. Uncle Sam has put up with enough from the

Kaiser. But how could the President declare war? It takes an act of Congress to do that."

"I forgot that you have been so ill you haven't been told the news," said Chester. "I'll explain it to you. Several days ago the President went before a joint session of the Senate and the House of Representatives and asked that Congress declare a state of war with Germany. Congress obeyed in jig time. Then the resolution went to President Wilson for his signature."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Hal. "I knew that the American Congress could be depended upon to do its duty."

"Well," said Chester dryly, "the vote wasn't unanimous. It was held up in the Senate by a group of pacifist senators."

"What!" exclaimed Hal. "You mean to tell me that any Congressmen opposed the President in declaring a just war?"

"You bet they did, and they kicked up quite a rumpus. However, war has been declared and most of the President's opponents have announced they will stand behind him."

Hal glanced hurriedly around the tent.

"Where are my clothes?" he demanded.

"Why?"

"Think I'm going to lie abed here with all this good news in my head?"

"But you can't get up yet. The doctor says it

will be another week before you are fit to be about."

"I don't care what the doctor says. I'm going to get up and that's all there is about it. Where are my clothes?"

In vain Chester protested. Hal was persistent.

"Oh, well," said Chester at last, "if you are determined there is no use arguing with you. I expected something like this, however, which is the reason I hid your clothes. I'll get 'em."

He left the tent, but was back in a few minutes with Hal's garments in his hands.

"Where were they?" Hal wanted to know.

"In Stubbs' quarters."

"So Stubbs had a hand in it, eh? Well, I'll get even with him for that."

"How does your shoulder feel?" asked Chester.

"Little stiff, but the pain is gone. I'd like to get my hands on the Fritz who is responsible for putting me to bed for almost two weeks."

"You never can tell; you might have a chance some day," said Chester. "I don't know whether you know it or not, but you've been a pretty sick boy. Doctor at first wasn't sure you were going to get well. He told me yesterday that you had been out of danger for several days, but that he was going to keep you in bed on general principles."

"Doctor was mistaken," said Hal clapping on his cap. "Come on; let's get out of here."

Chester followed his chum out of the tent.

While the two young friends make their way through the great British camp on the battlefield of France, it will be necessary to take time to introduce them to such readers as have not met them before.

Hal Paine was about 19 years old and Chester was about the same age. The two had been in Berlin with Hal's mother at the outbreak of the great war and, through an accident, had been left behind when Mrs. Paine left the German capital. They had been through numerous adventures together and had rendered to the allied armies at various times such services that now, in the third year of the war, each held a captain's commission in the British army. These captaincies had been won as the result of accomplishing successfully a mission for General Haig, commander-in-chief of the British armies in France.

The two lads were the sons of American parents. Both had been born in the city of Quincy, Ill. Hal's father was dead, but Chester's father conducted a large lumber business in the northwest. The two lads had been chums since boyhood and it was only natural that where one was found, there would be the other also.

The boys had seen active service on many European battlefields. They had been with the Belgian army when the Germans descended on Liege in the

early days of the war; they had ridden through the mighty Carpathian mountains on the eastern front with the Cossacks; they had served with the Italians in the Alps and had fought with the French forces under Marshal Joffre and General Pétain.

Both lads had been wounded more than once and often had been at the very door of death; but their resourcefulness was great and their physical and moral stamina even greater. Thus both had come through the war safely up to this time.

Such was the courage of the two lads that even Sir Douglas Haig had come to look upon whatever piece of special work they undertook as good as accomplished. The British commander had grown very fond of the two lads.

In an engagement with a squadron of German Uhlans about two weeks before this story opens, Hal had been wounded. Had it not been for Chester, who rode by his side in the battle, it is probable that Hal would have been killed. It came about in this manner:

The British had advanced to drive off a German reconnoitering force. The German force was small, but the British numbered no more. It was night when the two bodies of horsemen came in contact. The British were commanded by Colonel John Taylor. Taken by surprise at the sudden appearance of the British and not being able to ascer-

tain the number of the attacking party, the Germans tried to flee.

But the English were too close, so the foe turned to give battle. Hal and Chester had accompanied the British force, not as officers, but rather because of an invitation from Colonel Taylor, for it was not believed that the Germans would give battle if attacked. A reconnoitering party seldom fights if it can be prevented.

When the Germans wheeled suddenly and hurled themselves upon the British, Hal and Chester found themselves by the side of Colonel Taylor, in the very midst of the foe. Fighting was at too close quarters for guns, so the British and French fell to with their sabers and lances.

Above there was a bright moon by which each side could clearly distinguish its foes.

A tall Uhlan officer slashed fiercely at Chester with his saber. Chester caught the blow upon his own sword, and before the German could recover the lad's weapon had pierced his adversary through the throat. The German reeled and fell to the ground, where the struggling men and horses trampled him into the mud.

Hal, however, now found himself beset by two foes—one on each side.

Warding off the blows of the man on the right, Hal thrust his revolver into the face of the man on the left and pressed the trigger. The man dropped,

but his other opponent succeeded in laying open the boy's shoulder with a sweeping blow of his saber, while at the same moment he fired at him, point blank. A swerving movement of Hal's horse saved his life, but the ball struck him in the other shoulder and he dropped to the ground.

Glancing in Hal's direction just as he slid to the ground, Chester saw the happening and urged his horse fiercely against the Germans, who were pressing the British close. Encouraged by his example, the British troopers hurled themselves forward with a shout. The Uhlans gave ground.

Quickly Chester slid from his horse and ran to Hal's side. The latter was unconscious. Chester lifted his friend's head to his knee and laid a hand over Hal's heart.

"He's not dead!" he told himself thankfully.

He picked Hal up in his arms and threw him across his horse. Then he climbed to the saddle again. As he did so, there came from in front a volley of musketry. The Germans had been reinforced, and now made ready to charge the British.

Realizing that he was hopelessly outnumbered, Colonel Taylor, who had gone through the struggle unscathed, gave the command to fall back, and a moment later Chester felt himself being carried back in the very center of the British force.

Fighting as they retreated, the British yielded ground slowly. It was apparent, however, outnum-

bered as they were, that they must soon put distance between themselves and the foe or they would be annihilated. Colonel Taylor gave the command to move at a gallop; and, still keeping their formation, the British retired.

The Germans pursued for the better part of a mile, but as the British at that time came in contact with their supports, the foe gave up the chase.

Chester hurriedly carried Hal to their quarters and summoned the surgeon. The latter dressed the wound.

"Is he badly hurt, doctor?" Chester asked.

The surgeon nodded.

"Pretty badly," he returned. "However, I have no doubt he will pull through. He has a remarkable constitution. Perfect quiet will help more than anything else."

And so for the better part of two weeks Hal lay quiet. He was unconscious for a good share of the time. Because of his chum's condition Chester had not told him of developments in the United States, fearing that excitement which would be occasioned by such news would work against his recovery. Also Chester realized, as the reader has seen, that once Hal had heard such news, he very probably would refuse to lie longer abed.

CHAPTER II

THE EVE OF VIMY RIDGE

It was a smiling commander-in-chief of British forces in France who greeted Hal and Chester half an hour after the two boys left their quarters.

"So," he said, addressing Hal, when they were alone in his quarters, "so you have heard the news, eh?"

"Yes, sir," returned Hal, "and it is good news, sir."

"So it is," thundered Sir Douglas Haig, striking the table a heavy blow with the flat of his hand. "It is news for which England and France and Italy, yes, and Belgium and Servia and Greece and the whole world have been waiting these three years. It is the greatest single occurrence since the declaration of war by Germany against Russia."

"I am glad you are pleased, sir," put in Chester.

"Pleased!" echoed the British commander. "And why shouldn't I be pleased? I'll tell you something. We have had hopes right along that the United States would come to our aid, but when she remained silent in spite of German atrocities—sinking of American ships with the loss of American lives—to say nothing of outrages upon defenseless people in conquered territory, we had begun to fear

that we had been misinformed as to your nation's spirit of right and justice. We had almost begun to believe that the United States was afraid to fight."

"Sir!" exclaimed Hal, half rising from his seat. "We——"

"Come, come!" said General Haig, smilingly. "No offense. I didn't mean to touch your pride. I'm just telling you what the condition was prior to the time your president demanded from the American Congress a declaration that a state of war existed with Germany. Whatever doubts existed in other nations have been put to rest for all time to come. What we are looking forward to now is the day when American troops shall be fighting shoulder to shoulder with our own veterans. Then indeed will the German Kaiser realize that the beginning of the end has come."

"You'll find, sir," said Chester, with pride in his voice, "that we turn out a first-class brand of fighting man in the United States."

"There is no doubt of that, my lad," said Sir Douglas Haig. "England hasn't forgotten the days of the Revolution and of 1812; neither has the rest of the world forgotten your Civil War and the Spanish-American trouble. But we have even better proof. The Canadian troops even now in France —of the same North American stock—are among our bravest and most devoted troops. Besides,

there are at least 50,000 citizens of the United States fighting in the allied armies today. Then, too," here the general allowed a smile to steal across his usually stern features, "then, too, I can point to the bravery and courage of two young American officers—Paine and Crawford—as additional proof."

Hal and Chester both flushed.

"We weren't fishing for compliments, sir," said Hal. "We have only done our best."

"And your best has been remarkably good," responded the British commander. "But it is not to discuss these matters that I summoned you here. There are other and more weighty matters to be considered."

"Is there something we may do, sir?" asked Chester easily.

General Haig nodded.

"There is," he said, "and if you will give me your attention I shall explain."

"Very well, sir," said both lads in a single voice.

"You may have surmised," began the general, "that now the United States has entered the war there will be a demand in your country for experienced officers to train the American troops, that the American fighting machine may be ready to take its place alongside our own men soon after it reaches French soil. For this purpose, although it is not generally known, the United States government has

asked that we take what officers we can spare from the battlefront and send them back to America to lend a hand in training. Now, I was wondering if you boys would like to undertake such work, or whether you would rather remain here. If you go, you will, of course, be given commissions in the United States army—probably as lieutenants—which means that you will lose rank over your present standing. I have no doubt, however, that it will not be long before you go higher. I know you both, you see. Come, now. Would you like to go home, or would you prefer to remain here?"

"Your excellency," said Hal without a moment's hesitation, "we have been well treated by the British, by the French and by others of the Allies with whom we have fought; but our hearts are with our own kind. We should be glad to go back and do what we can for Uncle Sam."

"I thought so," said General Haig. "So be it, then. Yet there is one thing I must tell you. If you start at once, you will miss what promises to be one of the most momentous spectacles of the war."

"And what may that be, sir?" asked Hal in surprise.

"This," said General Haig, "is the seventh day of April. Day after tomorrow, or rather on the evening of that day, the Canadian troops are going to take Vimy Ridge, or I miss my guess."

"You mean, sir," said Chester in some surprise, "that an advance has been decided upon?"

"I mean just that."

"That," said Hal, "will indeed be an ideal way of celebrating the entrance of the United States into the war."

"Exactly," replied General Haig, "and for that reason, too, it will be just another discomfiture added to the troubles of the German people."

"But Vimy Ridge, as it is held now, sir," said Chester, "is impregnable, from the German point of view."

"So far as that goes," returned the British commander with a slight smile, "the war is as good as over and the Allies have been properly chastised, from a German point of view."

"So you can see, Chester," Hal put in, "that you mustn't put too much reliance in the German point of view."

"I see," replied Chester somewhat sheepishly.

"From our point of view," said General Haig, "there is nothing impregnable about the German position on Vimy Ridge. However, the position is indeed a strategic one, and if we are to push our lines farther to the east, we must have control of Vimy Ridge if we hope for any degree of success."

"And the Canadians have been decided upon to turn the trick," said Hal musingly. "General, you could not entrust the task to better hands."

"No one knows that," said General Haig, "better than myself—unless it is the Canadians."

"But look here, Hal," said Chester suddenly. "If we accept His Excellency's offer and start for America at once, we will miss all that."

"By Jove!" said Hal. "That's so. Hm-m-m. I don't like to do that. I wonder, sir," turning to the British commander, "if it wouldn't be possible for us to stay here until after Vimy Ridge is in British hands?"

General Haig smiled.

"I expected something like that," he replied. "That's why I outlined the situation to you. I felt sure that you would want to be 'in at the death' on Vimy Ridge, and, as I owe you much, I feel that I can hardly refuse your request."

"You mean that we can stay for the battle and then go back to the United States?" asked Hal eagerly.

"Exactly, if you wish."

"You can bet we wish," declared Chester. "It may be peculiar, but it's a fact that, although we have seen service with practically all of the allied armies, we never yet have been assigned to duty with the Canadian troops."

"Well, that will soon be overcome," said General Haig. "I have work that will assure your being with the Canadians when they go over the top at Vimy Ridge. I did not wish you to undertake it, however,

if it is your desire to return at once to America."

"We shall be only too glad to help here first, sir," said Hal. "Good!" said the British commander. "I suppose you know the nature of the ground to the west of Vimy Ridge?"

"Yes, sir," returned Chester.

"Very well. Then you realize the desperate nature of the work ahead of the Canadians. You realize that a little forehanded information as to the disposition of the enemy's troops will stand General Redmond in good stead. It is this information I wish you to obtain if possible."

"You mean, sir, that it will be necessary for us to enter the German lines?"

"Not necessarily," said General Haig. "If you can learn anything by a flight over the German front, and are not brought down or driven off by German aeroplanes, you may learn as much as though you penetrated the heart of the German camp. However, the information I speak of is almost essential to the success of the undertaking. I know you will do what you can."

"Very good, sir," said Hal, saluting. "We shall report to you when we return."

"Report to General Redmond," instructed General Haig. "Time is one of the most important features now; and you will lose time if you report to me. I shall advise General Redmond to look to you for information. That is all, sirs."

The lads saluted again, and started from the general's quarters.

"One moment," the general called after them. The lads wheeled about and came to attention. "You will report to me when General Redmond has taken Vimy Ridge," said General Haig.

"It's about time we had something to do," said Hal, as the two lads moved toward their own quarters. "Here I've been lying in bed with all these things going on. I should have been out lending a hand."

"A lot of good you would have been with that bad shoulder," replied Chester. "Besides, you needed a little rest. You were all fagged out. You must remember that we've been through some strenuous days in the last three years."

"And I suppose they put me down and didn't touch you, eh?" said Hal sarcastically. "Since when did you become so much stronger than I am?"

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings," returned Chester with a grin, "but it's a fact that you haven't been in condition to do much for the last week, and you know it."

"Maybe not," said Hal, "but you'll find that I am in shape to pull your nose if you don't let me alone."

"By Jove!" said Chester. "You must be considerably better. You want to fight. That's a good sign. I'm glad to see you your old self once more."

"All right, then," replied Hal. "In that case

you'll quit harping on my recent illness. Hello, here's Stubbs' quarters. Let's go in and have some fun with him."

"We haven't much time," said Chester, "but I guess it won't do any harm. Besides, it's always legitimate to have a little fun with Stubbs."

The lads entered the tent without the formality of announcing themselves.

Inside, a small, rotund figure bent over a cot. A valise stood wide open on the covers, and into this the little man was throwing articles of clothing. He was working fast and didn't look up as the two lads entered the tent. The boys eyed him in silence a moment. Then Chester spoke.

"I say, Mr. Stubbs. Why all this haste and that big valise. Going on a journey?"

Stubbs stopped work, straightened up and looked around.

"Hello, boys," he replied. "Didn't hear you come in. Yep; going away."

"Where to?" demanded Hal.

"New York."

"Ha!" ejaculated Chester. "I see. Got fired, eh?"

"What's that?" demanded Stubbs. "Fired? Who? Me? Anthony Stubbs, the best war correspondent in these parts, fired? Do you think the editor of the New York *Gazette* is a fool? Of course I didn't get fired."

"What are you going back to New York for then?"

"Say," said Stubbs. "Didn't you know that the United States had declared war on Germany?"

"Sure, but what——"

"Think I want to fiddle around with this bunch when I can be assigned to a regular outfit?" Stubbs wanted to know. "I'm going home and come back here with Uncle Sam's troops. Don't bother me now. I'm busy. I'll stop in and see you before I go."

The little man refused to talk longer.

"Come on, Hal," said Chester. "Can't have any fun here now," and they left the tent.

CHAPTER III

RECONNOITERING

Flying low, Hal and Chester passed over the British lines and, moving swiftly eastward, soon mingled with other Allied aircraft that were maneuvering above the ground that lay between the two opposing armies. These others were scouting craft. It was their duty to keep the British commander posted when suspicious movements in the not far distant German lines indicated a possible advance or a possible retreat, or activity of any other kind. Then, too, it was their duty to beat back spying warplanes of the enemy, that the German commander might not be able to anticipate General Haig's plans.

But it was not the intention of the two boys to linger long with their fellow flyers. Hal expressed the slogan of both.

"We can't fool around here very long. Seems to me if some of these other fellows were on the job, it wouldn't be necessary for us to make this trip."

"It does seem so," Chester agreed. "Still, I'm rather glad to be up and doing again."

"No more so than I am," declared Hal. "You must remember that after a fellow has been tied to

a bed for a week or so, a little action provides the tonic that is most needed."

"Right you are. But have you hit upon any plan that will assure the success of our mission?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I haven't. We'll have to be guided by developments."

"Developments are likely at any time now," said Chester drily. "We've left all the other fellows behind."

Hal, who was steering the craft, looked back.

"By Jove! So we have," he said. "I'd no idea we had been flying so fast. Guess I'd better slow down. We're liable to encounter some of the enemy around here, and it behooves us to be careful."

"Right," replied Chester briefly.

Accordingly, Hal reduced the speed of the craft, at the same time sending it higher into the clouds.

"Little safer up here, I guess," he explained.

Chester nodded his assent, but said nothing.

For perhaps five minutes the machine flew along, but at the end of that time trouble bobbed up ahead in the shape of an airplane approaching from the direction of the German front. Hal espied it first. A quick touch of the elevating lever and the car, which carried the boys toward the foe, seemed to leap higher toward the heavens.

It needed no word from Hal to tell Chester that there was trouble ahead. Quickly he stooped and, picking up his rifle, looked to its magazine. Then

he sat quietly, holding the weapon across his knee.

"I'll see if I can keep above him," Hal called.

It was plain to both lads that the German—for such they were sure the approaching machine was—was bent upon a battle. He, too, was maneuvering for a position that would put his adversaries at his mercy.

It became a race into the clouds.

"No use, Chester," called Hal a few moments later. "He has the advantage of us. This contraption won't go as high as his will. It's up to us to find other means of disposing of him."

Chester said nothing, but only grasped his rifle the tighter.

The German aeroplane now was all of two hundred feet above the craft occupied by Hal and Chester, and was coming rapidly toward them. A moment later it was almost directly above. A man leaned over the side, and something whizzed by the boys' machine.

It was a bomb. Had it struck, it would have been the end of Hal and Chester.

Hal determined upon a desperate ruse.

"Hold tight, Chester!" he cried.

Chester asked no questions.

A moment later something flashed down from the 'plane above. At the same moment Hal drew his revolver with his free hand and fired.

Then the machine dropped downward with a sick-

ening sensation. Twice it turned over in midair, as it fluttered toward the ground. There was a shout of triumph from the air above, and the German machine descended rapidly to make an end of the British craft, should it, by any chance, not kill its occupants in its fall.

Suddenly there was a cry of alarm from the air. With a quick movement Hal had righted the apparently crippled craft, and it shot into the air like a catapult—directly toward the foe.

Chester, who at first had believed Hal had lost control, had, nevertheless, retained his composure, and when the car again ascended, he realized Hal's ruse, and that it was now up to him to dispose of the enemy. Hal was doing the steering. Chester's part would be the fighting.

So now, as the machines came within range, Chester threw his rifle to his shoulder, took quick aim at the pilot of the German craft, and pulled the trigger. Three shots he sent in rapid succession, and he felt the breeze of a bullet as it sped past his own ear, narrowly missing Hal on its errand of death.

Again and again the lad pressed the trigger; and then he gave a cry of triumph. The pilot in the German car threw up his hands, and with a cry toppled into space. The German machine, freed of a guiding hand, turned about crazily once or twice, and then plunged after the pilot.

Hal slowed down his own car.

"Good work, Chester," he said quietly. "It took you so long to get that fellow, though, that I was afraid he would get me first. Sounded like a battery of rapid firers was playing about my ears."

"Miss is as good as a mile," said Chester. "I got him, so you don't need to worry. But the next time you decide on any of this loop-the-loop business, tip me off in advance. You almost lost me when you acted so suddenly."

"Miss is as good as a mile," replied Hal, smiling.

Chester laughed.

"That's so," he agreed. "Works both ways, doesn't it?"

"Well," said Hal, "guess we had better be getting on about our business.'

Darkness fell again, as the boys moved more slowly toward the German lines.

"No moon," said Chester. "Things seem to be working in our favor."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Hal, "when you stop to think of it, things should work in our favor. We've got to lick these fellows, and the sooner it is over and done with the better for all concerned. We're in the right, you know."

"That's so," said Chester, "but wasn't it Napoleon who said that the Lord fights on the side with the heaviest artillery?"

"Something like that," agreed Hal. "Well, we've got that now, too. Therefore, we shall win."

From time to time the boys passed a German airplane, but the pilots of these, apparently believing the British craft one of their own, did not stop to investigate; and half an hour after darkness had fallen the boys were flying over the German lines.

"Wonder whether we had better go down?" suggested Chester.

"In these uniforms?" returned Hal. "Hardly."

"Guess you're right, but we can't get any information up here."

"Nevertheless, we shall try," said Hal.

A German 'plane approached from the east. Hal guided his craft toward it, and, keeping out of the flare of the German searchlight, hailed the pilot.

"Heard the news?" he called in German.

The other craft slowed down.

"No; what is it?" came a voice through the darkness.

"Grand advance starts to-morrow," returned Hal.

"Good! What are the arrangements?"

"Don't know. All I know is what I have told you. What would you consider likely?"

"Probably will start with a feint by the left wing," was the reply. "You know both wings have been drawn heavily upon to strengthen the center, and it is there that the attack probably will be made. I imagine the left will open the battle, however, and that the right wing will come into action next. Then the grand drive will be made along the center."

"What's the strength of the center now?" asked Hal.

The German made an estimate.

"But," said Hal, "that leaves Vimy Ridge, the key position, open to capture should the British make the effort."

"Exactly," was the reply, "but the British don't know it."

"Don't, eh?" muttered Chester to himself.

"I see," said Hal. "What's your idea of the strength of our forces guarding Vimy Ridge?"

Again the German estimated the number of troops there, together with the artillery force.

"All right," said Hal. "Guess we'll go through all right."

"We're bound to," said the German. "Thanks for the news."

The airplane sped off in the darkness.

"Guess we've learned enough," said Hal. "Back home for us."

"We've learned enough if it's authentic," said Chester.

"I'll wager it's authentic enough," replied Hal. "The position of the German troops probably is known to most German officers. We'll go now."

He turned the head of the craft toward the British lines.

CHAPTER IV

VIMY RIDGE

Vimy Ridge lies almost due south of Lens, the great coal mining center held by the Germans at the time this story opens. It is a key to the whole mining country to the north, to the south, and to the east. For an advance north or south of the ridge, it was imperative that General Haig have control of the ridge.

To the south the British had pushed their lines as far east as Monchy and Croisilles, and still farther south, to Boursies and Havrincourt. To the north, too, the British had advanced almost as far as Lens; in fact, the town several times had been almost within their grasp. The capture of Vimy Ridge, therefore, would not only protect an advance on Lens, but would put in British hands a salient that would go a long ways toward convincing the German general staff that the abandonment of its present front was not only propitious, but absolutely necessary.

This was the situation, then, when General Haig ordered General Redmond's Canadians to capture Vimy Ridge.

The action was opened, as had been most advances in the history of the war, with a terrific bombard-

ment. Countless thousands of shells were hurled into the German lines.

On the tenth day of April, there was left in the minds of the German general staff no doubt of General Haig's intentions.

From Givenchy-en-Gohelle to Heninsur-Cojeul, General Haig drove his attack straight into the Arras salient. Givenchy lies about a mile and a half due east of the town of Souchez, itself some eight miles north of Arras, on the road to Bethune. Some eleven miles, as the crow flies, almost due south is the town and the famous ridge of Vimy.

It was over this that the Canadians swept, carrying in a few hours the network of tremendous fortified positions, which the Germans had declared were impregnable, just as they had made the same claim for Bapaume. Farther south, the advance was pushed along the main road from Arras almost to Lens. In this advance, the village of Thelus was stormed and captured by the Canadian troops.

In recounting the famous charge of the Canadians at Vimy Ridge, it becomes necessary to give an account of the British advance in adjacent places, so closely are they all connected.

From Thelus the advance continued farther south along the road from Arras to Douai, where the village of Fampoux, about six miles out of Arras and just south of the road, was captured by desperate fighting. South again the British pushed forward

along the main road from Arras to Cambrai, capturing the village of Tilloy.

While this attack was being delivered on the left of the British line, a further advance was being made along the road from Bapaume to Cambrai in the center. At the same time the attack upon St. Quentin, farther south, was being driven home.

The Canadians carried Vimy Ridge in their first attack. The ridge was a key position, without which the famous Hindenburg line, to the south, would lose stability, and without which it would be unable to pivot backwards at its own time and convenience, as it had done for so long. Moreover, it was a rampart in front of the great French industrial region, from which the Germans drew so much of their strength in materials of war.

Less than an hour after the Canadians swept to the attack, 5,816 Germans had fallen into their hands. These figures were given out by the British war office, and the loss later was admitted by Berlin. These prisoners included almost 200 officers.

The German defenses at Vimy Ridge comprised a network of trenches and fortified localities—Neuville, Vitasse, Telegraph Hill, Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines, Observation Ridge, St. Laurent, Blangy, les Tilleuls and La Folie Farm.

The exact strength of the Canadians massed in the attack on Vimy Ridge may never be known. No

announcement of the numbers was made by the war office.

It was at the first break of dawn that the Canadians swept forward. Apparently, their advance had not been anticipated by the Germans, for they were almost upon the trenches before the enemy became aware of his danger.

The distance between the British and German trenches was covered slowly by the Canadians. There was no running charge. British officers had learned in previous engagements the futility of rushing their men forward at the double, only to have them reach the foe tired out and unable to cope with the Germans, fresh from their rest.

So the Canadians advanced slowly and confidently in spite of the great gaps the German artillery cut in their lines. As fast as a man dropped, his place was filled. It was an imposing sight, this advance—and the morale of these Canadians under the terrible fire did much to shake the confidence of the foe.

In vain the Germans poured rifle and machine gun fire into their ranks. There was no faltering among the ranks of the advancing men from America. In vain the big guns hurled shells into their midst, cutting great holes in the lines. The Canadians pressed steadily forward.

The advance across the open took the better part of an hour, so slowly did the Canadians march. An

hour under the deadly fire of the enemy played havoc with the Canadians, but it did not disturb their morale. They advanced as coolly as though on parade.

From behind, the great British guns shelled the foe in the trenches in an effort to protect the Canadian advance. This did considerable to lighten the task of the Canadians, but it was not sufficient to check the death-dealing fire that confronted them.

Directly before the enemy's trenches, the Canadian line seemed to halt for a moment. Officers harangued the men, and then the Canadians jumped for the trenches.

Right down upon the foe they leaped, and rifles and machine guns became silent, as the fighting continued hand-to-hand. The apparent death-like stillness inside the trench was not apparent outside, however. The duel of big guns continued across the interlocked men, but these were as silence to the men, as they fought in the trenches.

The clash of swords could be heard, and occasionally a revolver spoke, as a Briton or a German was able to bring the weapon to bear in the press of conflict. It was a horrible tangling of human beings.

Gradually the Canadians gained the upper hand. Standing shoulder to shoulder, they drove the foe from his trenches at the point of the bayonet and the mouths of their revolvers.

That division of the Canadian force that had advanced upon the part of Vimy Ridge known as Telegraph Hill was the first to succeed in dispossessing the foe. A mighty cheer rang out as the Germans fled.

Alarmed at the Canadian success at this particular point, the German supporting forces to both north and south were thrown into confusion. They still fought bravely enough against the victorious Canadians, but the fighting now became individual rather than concerted. It was this that told the Canadian officers that success was theirs.

They urged their men into the struggle with renewed vigor, and the Canadians sprang forward with redoubled confidence. In vain the Germans, fighting singly and in groups of from five to twenty, contested every foot of the way. They were driven from the trenches or transfixed by British bayonets where they stood.

As it became apparent that the day was lost to German arms, men threw down their arms and surrendered wholesale. These were passed back by the front lines, who had no time to bother with such excess baggage. Then they were hurried to the rear.

Flushed with success, Canadians clambered out of the trenches and pursued the foe, as he fled from the ridge. After an hour of fighting in the trenches, the positions known as Neuville-Vitasse, Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines, Observation Ridge, St. Laurent, Blangy,

Telegraph Hill, and les Tilleuls, were in Canadian hands. There still remained La Folie Farm to be captured.

Now that the Germans had been driven from the ridge in all other sectors, General Redmond turned his attention to the farm, where the Germans were still offering desperate resistance in spite of the odds against them.

General Redmond realized that without La Folie Farm in his possession, the other successes were not complete. The farm must be captured at all hazards—and this before the Germans were able to bring up reinforcements, were such the aim of the enemy's commander.

Therefore, posting his men in the newly-won positions in sufficient force to insure them against German attacks for the moment, he ordered pursuit of the fleeing foe stopped, and turned his attention solely to the capture of La Folie Farm.

In this sector the Germans were still perhaps two thousand strong. General Redmond ordered all the men that he felt he could possibly spare to reinforce the Canadians opposed to them.

He glanced round for an aide to carry his instructions. His eyes rested on Hal and Chester.

"Captain Paine!" he commanded. Hal sprang to his side. "My compliments to Colonel Johnson, and order him to the support of Colonel Adamson."

Hal jumped his horse that stood near, and dashed

away. Awaiting no instructions from General Redmond, Chester also mounted his charger and followed.

CHAPTER V

VICTORY

Colonel Johnson, to whom Hal now carried General Redmond's instructions, had commanded the forces that had stormed and captured that portion of the enemy's position known as St. Laurent. The distance from St. Laurent to La Folie Farm, where the battle still raged, was perhaps two miles. There were other Canadian troops closer, but General Redmond now called upon the victors at Laurent to support Colonel Adamson, because he felt these troops could be spared with less danger. Besides, he would have other troops thrown into the St. Laurent salient.

Hal found Colonel Johnson smoking a common corncob pipe, as he complacently surveyed the field of battle. From time to time, through a glass, he gazed toward the mass of fighting figures at La Folie Farm. But, so far, he had no orders to move his position, and he naturally believed the fighting at the farm was being carried out in accordance with General Redmond's plans.

Colonel Johnson glanced up as Hal galloped to his side. He took the pipe from his mouth, and looked at the lad inquiringly.

"General Redmond orders you to move to the sup-

port of Colonel Adamson at La Folie Farm immediately!" cried Hal, as he drew rein.

Instantly all became action. Members of the colonel's staff rushed hither and thither with orders; and a moment later Colonel Johnson's division moved rapidly toward the farm.

Chester came up with Hal at this juncture, and the two boys ranged themselves alongside Colonel Johnson, who now directed the advance from his horse. As they moved forward, it became apparent that the Canadians in the vicinity of La Folie Farm were getting the worst of the encounter. As the reinforcements came within half a mile of the farm, the Canadians already, at that point, were forcibly ejected from the improvised trenches. Germans appeared behind them in pursuit. Colonel Johnson ordered two squadrons of cavalry forward at a gallop.

"May we go with them, sir?" asked Chester. "We may be of some assistance."

Colonel Johnson nodded, and both lads gave rein to their horses without another word. They ranged themselves beside Captain MacDonald, in charge of the advance.

The Canadians moved forward with the swiftness of the wind. They came upon the retreating infantry, which parted to let them through. These latter troops, seeing reinforcements so close at hand, reformed coolly under command of their officers and

the deadly German fire, and by the time Colonel Johnson's main force came up with them, they were again ready for the fray.

German cavalry issued from the northern extremity of La Folie Farm to give battle to the advancing Canadian cavalry, and throw them back. Nothing loath to accept battle in this manner, Captain MacDonald wheeled his men slightly, and bore down upon the foe from the flank. The opposing cavalry were so close together at that moment that the German commander had not time to reform his men to meet this maneuver, so that when the horses of the riders crashed together the Canadians held the advantage.

The rifle fire, which had greeted the Canadians as they charged, was silent now. The German infantry, in the shelter of the trenches, could not fire without the imminent risk of shooting friend as well as foe. The fighting was hand-to-hand. Swords, lances and revolvers were brought into play.

Hal and Chester, still keeping by the side of Captain MacDonald, found themselves in the thickest of the press. In vain the German commander strove to break the Canadian formation. To all such attempts, quick commands from Captain MacDonald brought maneuvers that blocked the German efforts. More German cavalry advanced to the support of their comrades, and the Canadians found themselves outnumbered two to one.

Realizing that there was no need of sacrificing his men needlessly, Captain MacDonald ordered his men to fall back slowly. As the retirement began, the Germans pressed forward with cheers. Time after time the foe attempted to break the solid front of the Canadians, as they fell back. The front held like a stone wall.

From farther back a bugle sounded. The Canadian infantry had come into position, and was moving forward to the attack.

The commander of the German cavalry hesitated; then ordered a retreat to the protection of the trenches. It was the moment for which Captain MacDonald had been waiting. With a loud cry to his men, he spurred his horses forward. Hal and Chester kept close by his side.

The Canadians flung themselves upon the retreating foe like a shot from a catapult. Germans dropped from their horses right and left. The German commander realized that he had but one recourse. He turned to give battle.

The opposing forces met with a shock. A volley of small arm fire greeted the Canadians, as they came to hand grips with the enemy. The Canadians answered this, and then fell to work with cold steel. In this line of fighting, there could be no question of the superiority of the Canadians. Fight hard as they would, the Germans were forced to give ground.

In the center of the German line a gap appeared

suddenly. Captain MacDonald was prompt to take advantage of the opening. Followed by Hal, Chester, and perhaps a hundred men, he led the way. A moment later the German forces were cut in two.

But the British, between the German forces, were in a ticklish position. The foe rained small arm fire upon them from two sides. Suddenly Captain MacDonald clapped a hand to his head; then toppled from his horse. The Canadians raised a cry of alarm, and slackened their speed.

Chester realized on the instant that to hesitate now invited certain disaster. There was no time to stop, dismount, and examine the nature of Captain MacDonald's wound. That would have to come later. The thing of prime importance was to rally the men, and prevent the enemy from crushing their resistance.

"Forward, men!" he cried.

The Canadians hesitated no longer. With a cry they dashed after Chester, who, closely followed by Hal, was pressing into the very midst of the enemy.

Half a dozen Germans dashed toward Chester at full speed. One of these the lad dropped with a bullet from his revolver. A second pitched sidewise from his horse, as a bullet from Hal's automatic struck home. Realizing the danger of the two boys, the Canadian troopers dashed forward with wild cries.

Chester parried a slashing blow aimed at him by a German lieutenant, and again the lad's revolver spoke sharply. There was one less German to contend with.

Hal emptied his own automatic into the ranks of the foe. A German struck at him with his sword, but the lad caught the blow upon his now empty weapon, and, with a quick movement of his right arm, ran the German through.

Hal had allowed the reins to fall loose upon his horse's neck, as had the others of the troop. Still brandishing his empty revolver in his left hand, and holding his sword aloft with his right, he continued to push forward.

The sharp crack, crack of rifle fire to the south told the boys that the infantry had come into contact with the foe, and that the battle was raging all along the line. It was apparent that the German cavalry commander was making a desperate effort to skirt the end of the German trenches, and get his forces back to the shelter of protecting artillery fire intact. Hal realized that to prevent this a desperate venture was necessary.

Guarding his head and body from saber strokes of the enemy, he shouted his plan to Chester.

"All right!" cried the latter.

Hal wheeled his horse about suddenly, and dashed toward the rear. The little force of Canadians had advanced well into the gap in the German line, and

the foe now seemed on the point of doing what Hal had anticipated—cutting the few Canadians off altogether from their support by forging in behind them.

Hal avoided the closing jaws of the vise by a rapid spurt, and as the Germans met behind the Canadian force—enveloping them completely—he dashed toward where the remainder of the original troop was still endeavoring to force the foe back on the right.

With a shout to Lieutenant Timson, who was now in command of that troop, he pointed out the danger of the others, and ordered an attack to relieve them. With a parting volley from side arms, the Canadians permitted the foe in front of them to go free, while they turned their efforts to relieving the little body of men surrounded by the foe.

Hal led the way.

Attacked suddenly from behind, the German line staggered; then it turned to confront the Canadians. But these men, realizing the seriousness of the situation that confronted their friends and companions, were not to be denied.

They hit the German rear line while going forward at a gallop, and, though many a man toppled from his horse with a German bullet in his body, the rest pressed on. The impetus of the charge broke the German rear, and a path was opened through which the Canadians advanced and ranged them-

selves alongside the men who, a moment before, had seemed in danger of annihilation.

So the Canadians were saved.

But the fight was not yet over. The Germans still offered strenuous resistance in front, as they withdrew slowly.

Hal pushed his horse through the midst of the Canadian troops, and soon found himself again by Chester's side. With the Canadians joined again, the lad felt that the time had come for the deciding stroke he had determined upon before he left Chester's side.

With a cry to the men, the lad wheeled suddenly to the left, and dashed into the midst of the Germans in that section. The suddenness of this flank movement again took the Germans by surprise, and before the enemy commander had time to meet the maneuver, the Canadians had burst through.

Realizing that he had been outmaneuvered, and that the safety of his troops lay in flight, the German commander gave the command to retreat. The Germans broke and fled.

It now became a question of whether the Canadians could out-run them in their race for the trenches, to reach which it was necessary for the foe to make a detour to the extreme end of the trench on the north. Canadians and Germans alike seemed to give up all idea of battle, as they raced in that direction.

Half a dozen Germans, mounted on superb chargers, led the foe, and it was plain to Hal and Chester that they would reach the coveted position before the Canadians. Both boys dashed forward in an effort to intercept them. Three Canadian troopers, also well mounted, came close behind them.

At the extreme northern end of the trenches stood a farmhouse. This was called La Folie mansion. The Germans reached the house fifty yards ahead of Hal, Chester and the three Canadian troopers, and disappeared around the side of the house. As the lads drew rein when they reached the house, Hal's cap leaped from his head. The Germans had taken up a position behind the house in an effort to cover the retreat of their friends

"I say," cried Hal, "this won't do!"

He led the way quickly to the other side of the house.

The remaining Canadians and the remaining Germans, meanwhile, still were dashing toward them.

"We've got to get rid of these fellows," said Chester. "They're likely to sneak around and pot us."

He looked around. Above his head was a window. He turned to one of the Canadian troopers who had sought shelter with him. "Lend a hand here," he said. "I'm going inside, and I'll help the rest of you up. We can cover our fellows, once we are inside."

No questions were asked. Hal felt the necessity

of doing something immediately, and he believed Chester's plan a good one.

One of the Canadians raised Chester to his shoulders. The lad found that he could just reach the window. It was closed, but the lad shattered the pane of glass with the hilt of his sword, and then drew himself up.

Hal followed Chester into the house, and next came the troopers. The last man was pulled up by main strength.

Hardly had they got safely inside when a squadron of horsemen dashed up. They were Germans.

The enemy had won the race to the house.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIGHT FOR THE FARM

"THEY don't know we're in here, that's one satisfaction," said Hal.

"Those first fellows to get here know we're about some place," returned Chester, "and you can bet they won't be long figuring out that we have climbed in."

"I guess you're right," Hal agreed, "and such being the case, it's up to us to do something to protect ourselves when they come after us."

"Maybe they won't come," said Chester. "You haven't forgotten our troops are on the way, have you?"

"No, I haven't forgotten it, but I don't believe the Germans are ready to give up the fight yet."

"You are right, sir," put in one of the troopers. "I would suggest, sir, that we guard the doors and windows."

"A good suggestion," said Hal. "Chester, I'll guard the window here where we came in, and you guard the one on the other side." He turned to the soldiers. "What are your names?"

"Smith, sir," said the one who had suggested guarding the doors and windows.

The others gave the names of Thompson and Caldwell.

"All right," said Hal. "Smith, you stand guard in the back room, and Thompson and Caldwell, I will depend upon you two to guard the doors."

The men saluted, and took up the positions indicated.

At that moment firing broke out outside the house. Hal poked his head out of the window. A short distance away he made out the forms of the first of the advancing Canadians. The Germans had opened fire on them from the protection of the house.

"Guess it won't stop them, though," muttered Hal with a grin.

The lad was right. In spite of the withering fire from behind the farmhouse, Lieutenant Timson halted his men and lined them up, as though on parade. Then, separating them into two bodies, he ordered a charge.

The Canadians galloped toward the house, half going to one side, and half to the other.

There was nothing those inside the house could do but listen. The firing became heavier, then gradually grew fainter, and finally ceased.

"Must have surrendered," said Chester.

"Or else we are still pursuing them," said Hal.

At this moment came the sound of heavy footsteps below.

"Hello!" ejaculated Hal. "Wonder who's down there."

"Probably a few of the enemy, who have come in to get out of harm's way," returned Chester.

"We'll see," said Hal briefly, and strode toward the door that opened on the stairway.

"Careful, Hal," Chester warned. "You're liable to draw a bullet."

Hal flung open the door, and peered into the darkness.

"Can't see anything," he called to Chester. "I'm going down."

He closed the door behind him, and descended the steps quietly. At the bottom he hesitated a moment, and then, hearing the sound of voices toward the front of the house, he tiptoed in that direction.

"Guess we are safe enough for the moment," said a voice in German. "We've been beaten, all right, but I believe the British will be unable to catch our troops. When the enemy returns, we shall wait until after dark, and make an effort to reach our own lines. We will fight if necessary."

"Well, there are a dozen of us," said a second voice. "We should give a pretty good account of ourselves if worst comes to the worst."

"Thanks," said Hal to himself. "I'm glad I know how many of you there are, anyhow."

He moved back toward the steps. And then an accident happened.

Hal stumbled over a chair, which fell to the floor

with a clatter. The lad picked himself up quickly, and stood silent a moment, listening.

Startled exclamations were rung from the Germans.

"Must be those British who pursued us to the house," said a voice. "I thought they had gone with the other troops. I see now, however, that they are hidden in the house. If I remember correctly, there were only five of them, including two officers. There are enough of us here to dispose of them."

"Where do you suppose they are?" asked a second voice.

"Upstairs, most likely, although by the sound of that chair tumbling over, I should judge that at least one of them has come down to reconnoiter. I'll have a look."

Hal's hand dropped to his revolver.

"You'd better not come fooling around here," he told himself.

The German advanced toward the door at the foot of the steps. He found the chair over which Hal had stumbled, but did not perceive Hal in the darkness. He stooped over and picked up the chair.

As he did so, Hal reversed his revolver quickly, and brought the butt down on the German's head. Then the lad dashed to the steps, and mounted, three at a time.

The sound created by the German's fall attracted the attention of his companions, and they sprang

forward. One of them saw Hal's shadow disappearing up the stairs—the lad had not taken time to close the door behind him—and drew his revolver and fired. Hal felt a bullet whistle past his ear. Before the man could fire again, Hal had flung open the door at the head of the steps, and darted inside. He swung the door to behind him, and turned the key in the lock.

"Close call," he said quietly to Chester, who had sprung forward, as he sprang into the room. "That bullet didn't miss me much."

"Well," said Chester, "since you are not hurt, tell me what you found out."

"I found out there are twelve Germans down there," said Hal briefly.

"That so?" said Chester. "Then I guess we had better be getting out of here."

"And get shot on the outside, eh?" asked Hal.

"You have forgotten we are in our own lines now," said Chester. "The enemy has fled, and we are in possession of all of Vimy Ridge."

"What do you think the Germans in this house are going to be doing while we are going out?" Hal wanted to know. "Sleeping?"

"That's so," Chester agreed. "Well, we'll have to dispose of them first, then. That's all there is about that."

"Sounds easy," said Hal dryly. "There are five of us and an even dozen of them. Suppose all we

have to do is call upon them to surrender. Is that your idea?"

"Don't get sarcastic, now," returned Chester. "We've been in more ticklish situations than this, and have come out with whole skins. I guess we can do it again."

"All right," said Hal. "You're in command of this expedition. It's up to you to show us the way out."

"Well, I'll show it to you quickly," declared Chester. "Call the men here."

Hal followed instructions, and, a moment later, the four were grouped around Chester. The lad explained the situation.

"There is little likelihood that we can depend upon help from the outside," he said. "In spite of the fact that we are within our own lines, we might just as well be in Berlin for all the good that will do us. Hal says the Germans below intend to make off in the night. That was their intention before they knew we were in here. Now they may be afraid to follow that plan, for fear we shall shoot them down as they go. Therefore, my idea is that, knowing they outnumber us, they will try to dispose of us first."

"Which is good reasoning," Hal agreed.

"Well," said Chester, "we won't wait for them to take the initiative. We'll go down after them."

"Good," said Hal, "and be shot."

"Oh, I guess not," said Chester.

"Maybe you know," said Hal, "but I want you to understand that I was down there a few moments ago, and almost came back a corpse. Therefore, I have ideas of my own on the matter."

Chester smiled.

"But this is such a simple little thing," he said.

"Elucidate," said Hal briefly.

"All right. Now, the Germans want to get away from here live men, don't they?"

"So I should suspect."

"And our immediate ambitions are practically the same?"

"Exactly."

"Then," said Chester, "I'll hold a powwow with the enemy, and see if we can't reach an agreement whereby we may all go our separate ways in peace."

"By Jove!" said Hal. "Now, it's funny I didn't think of that. A good plan, Chester."

"That's my idea," returned Chester. "There is only this much about it. We must wait until after they go, for, as you know, they are not to be trusted. They would shoot us down the moment our backs were turned."

"But will they trust us?" asked Hal.

"They'll have to," replied Chester. "Besides, they can't stay here forever. Our troops will be coming back before long, and then they are sure to be captured. This way they have a chance of escape, though small, indeed."

"Well, put it up to them," said Hal.

Chester opened the door to the stairway, and stood to one side, that he might be safe from a possible bullet. Then he hailed the foe below in German.

Hal recognized in the voice that answered the man he had knocked down.

Chester explained the matter in as few words as possible and the Germans held a consultation.

"We accept," called the German a few moments later, "providing you leave the house first."

"Not much," replied Chester. "You go first or we all stay. We hold the upper hand, because you know you couldn't drive us out before the rest of our troops return."

Again the Germans considered.

"We accept," a voice called finally. "We shall leave the house an hour after dark. We rely upon your honor not to molest us."

"You will be safe as far as we are concerned," replied Chester.

The parley ended.

An hour after dark, Chester, looking from the window, saw the twelve German forms steal stealthily from the house.

"We're safe at last," he said. "Let's get out of here."

They left the house, keeping a wary eye out, in the meantime, for possible treachery on the part of the foe. But, apparently, the latter were too glad to be

out of the house to pay further attention to the five Britons.

Half an hour later Hal and Chester reported to General Redmond.

CHAPTER VII

OFF FOR HOME

"Now," said Hal, as they left General Redmond's tent with the praise of the Canadian commander ringing in their ears, "now for General Haig, and then back to the good old U. S. A."

"Right," agreed Chester; "but I am glad we stayed to see the capture of Vimy Ridge."

"So am I," declared Hal. "It should go a long ways toward making a general advance easier. And it might be well to mention, by the way, that the Canadian troops are regular fighters."

"I haven't seen any better," replied Chester.

"But you will," said Hal quietly.

"Think so? Who?"

"Uncle Sam's boys in khaki."

"By Jove! You're right; and believe me I shall be glad when the time comes for us to go into battle with them."

"So shall I, but I am afraid it will not be for a long time. It will take considerable training and seasoning before troops, no matter how brave, are fit to take their places with the British and French."

"That's so, too, but the time will come, and when it does, you can bet there will be some regular fighting."

The rest of the journey was made in silence.

Both lads were indeed eager to return to the United States, although neither showed it. Three years of war had taught them to be patient, and while they would be glad to get home again, if only for a short time, if something transpired to make the trip impossible, no disappointment would be shown by either.

They were particularly anxious to go now that they felt sure permanent success had perched upon the allied arms. The capture of Vimy Ridge by the Canadians was a success that would go down in history as one of the greatest of the many great feats of the war. The Canadians had carried every point of attack, and were now resting on their laurels, secure in their knowledge that the heaviest of German counter-attacks could not dislodge them.

Hal and Chester had not seen their homes for more than three years. They had seen Hal's mother and Chester's mother once, for a short time, after the war broke out. This was in Italy. Chester's Uncle John also had been there, but owing to a series of misfortunes the lads had been separated from them, and they did not know now whether their mothers and Chester's uncle had returned to the United States or not.

While both longed to see their mothers, each was of the opinion that service in their adopted cause came first; and now that the United States had

entered the war, they knew that their duties were even clearer. Nevertheless, they had decided, if opportunity offered to spend a few days at home when they were again in America.

It was early the following morning, after a refreshing rest in their own quarters, that Hal and Chester again stood before Sir Douglas Haig, commander-in-chief of the British forces in France.

"General Redmond informs me, sirs," said the British field marshal, "that you have rendered him invaluable service. He informs me that information you furnished him did much toward driving the enemy from Vimy Ridge. I wish to add my praise to his."

"Thank you, sir," said both boys in confusion and in the same breath.

"And now," said General Haig, "I suppose you wish to be off for your own America?"

The faces of both lads lighted up.

"We shall be glad to go, sir," said Hal quietly.

General Haig smiled.

"When I was your age," he said, "I should have been greatly excited in anticipation of such a journey. I see that three years of service have had their effect upon you. It is well. You have learned in three years much that some men fail to learn in a lifetime."

General Haig turned to his desk and picked up two papers. These he extended to the two lads.

"These," he said, "grant you both indefinite leave of absence. While you are going back to your own country and will soon hold officers' commissions in the army of the United States, you still will maintain your rank in His Majesty's service." General Haig turned again to his desk and picked up two more papers. "These," he said, handing them to the boys, "you will present to the British ambassador in Washington, who, in turn, will give you letters to the American Chief of Staff. What your duties will be then, I cannot say. But I will say this: No matter what they may be, I am sure that they could be in no more capable hands."

General Haig rose to his feet and the boys understood that the interview was at an end.

"You will proceed from here to London," said General Haig. "There you will report to the British minister of war. Other British, and some French officers, are being sent to America to train your troops. You will be accompanied by them. Arrangements already have been made to transport these men across. That is all I can tell you."

"We are indeed grateful to you for this opportunity, sir," said Chester. "Of course it is true that we would rather be with Uncle Sam, but next to the American forces, we should like to serve under you, sir."

Again General Haig smiled.

"I thank you," he said quietly. "From young

men such as you, such words mean much to an old soldier like me. I shall expect to see you back with your Uncle Sam's forces before many months. Until then, good-bye."

Hal and Chester saluted, but the general extended a hand to each, which the lads grasped heartily, and the general wrung them. Then the two boys came to attention once more, turned on their heels and strode from General Haig's quarters.

"A capable officer, and a gentleman," said Hal, when they were outside.

"I like him immensely," said Chester. "Well, let's get our things together and start our journey."

As the boys were in the midst of packing their few belongings, Hal stopped suddenly and gave utterance to a long whistle.

"What's the matter?" asked Chester, looking up.

"I was just wondering what has happened to Stubbs," replied Hal.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Chester. "Funny, but I had forgotten all about him. Wonder if he is still alive, or whether he has gone?"

"I'll see," said Hal briefly.

He left the tent and was back in a few minutes.

"Well?" asked Chester anxiously.

"Gone," replied Hal briefly. "Quarters are now occupied by someone else."

"Too bad," said Chester. "We could have made the trip together."

"Well," said Hal, "we shall have to look him up and pay our respects when we get to New York."

"We certainly shall," agreed Chester.

The boys took their departure from the front that night. Morning found them in Paris, from which they took train to Calais. The crossing to Dover was made without incident, and two days later the lads found themselves aboard a trans-atlantic liner bound for New York.

The vessel steamed out from a British port under heavy convoy. The waters in proximity to Great Britain were known to shelter many German submarines, which lay in wait to prey upon helpless merchant vessels, and the British government had no mind to give one of these underseas terrors an opportunity to attack a vessel carrying officers to train Uncle Sam's fighting men.

The heavy convoy was taken as ample defense should a German submarine or a fleet of the subterranean terrors spring to the attack.

As General Haig had informed them, there were many British and French officers aboard the vessel. These also carried letters of introduction to the British minister in Washington. They, too, would spend the next few months teaching American soldiers the rudiments of warfare as conducted in the greatest of all wars.

The voyage was without incident. Not a submarine or other danger was sighted or encountered.

After their hard months of service, the ocean trip was indeed a boon to the two lads. Their cheeks took on a fresh color; their appetites improved and the salty sea air braced them wonderfully.

"By George, this is great!" said Hal, the third day out, as the two stood forward, their heads bared to the cold air.

"Certainly is," Chester agreed. "Nevertheless, I am getting a bit impatient to sight the shore line of the United States."

Hal smiled.

"You remember what General Haig said," he grinned. "Just hold your horses. We'll get there."

And so they did. It was on the evening of the fifth day out that Chester, standing forward again, caught the hail of the lookout.

"Land ahead!"

A few moments later Hal and Chester both were able to make out the distant shore.

"There is just one thing I want to see that will convince me we are nearing the right port," said Chester, "and we'll sight that soon."

They did. It was the Statue of Liberty.

CHAPTER VIII

STUBBS AGAIN

Hal and Chester decided to spend the night in New York and take an early morning train for Washington. Some of the others aboard planned to leave for the capital on the first train, but most signified their intention of remaining in the metropolis until the following day.

"Where'll we stop?" asked Chester.

"They tell me there's a pretty fair hotel here called the McAlpin," returned Hal. "We may as well put up there."

They took a taxicab from the pier to the hotel.

"Now," said Chester, "the first thing to do is to send telegrams home to see where our mothers are. We don't know whether we shall be able to go to Illinois, so we will have them come and see us."

"Good idea," said Hal. "We'll do that right now."

They sent the telegrams from the telegraph office in the hotel, and then turned their attention toward dinner.

"Feel like I could eat a bear," grinned Chester.

"Same here," said Hal. "Let's eat, then."

It was during dinner that a sudden thought struck Hal.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed.

"What's up now?" asked Chester.

For answer Hal called the waiter.

"You've heard of *The Gazette,* a newspaper?" he questioned.

"Yes, sir," returned the waiter.

"Is it a morning or an afternoon paper?"

"It comes out in the morning, sir."

"Good. Thanks."

The waiter moved back.

"What's the idea now?" Chester wanted to know.

"Well," said Hal, "we must leave here early in the morning; but I thought, if possible, we would like to pay our respects to Mr. Anthony Stubbs."

"So we would," declared Chester; "but where will we find him at this hour?"

"At the office, most likely," returned Hal.

"What! At night?"

"You just heard the waiter tell me *The Gazette* is a morning paper, didn't you?"

"Yes, but——"

"Then the chances are Stubbs will be on the job."

"By George! Maybe you're right. It's worth trying. We'll hunt up *The Gazette* office as soon as we have finished dinner."

Nine o'clock found the two lads in the counting room of *The Gazette,* in that historic part of New York known as Park Row.

"Where will I find Mr. Stubbs?" Hal asked of a man at the counter.

"Stubbs? You mean the war correspondent?"

"Yes."

"Take the elevator to the fifth floor."

The lads took the elevator. As they emerged they found themselves in what appeared to be a little reception room. A small boy rose to greet them.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"We wish to see Mr. Stubbs."

The boy looked them over carefully.

"Army officers!" he exclaimed in an awed voice. "Is it Stubbs the war correspondent you want to see?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"He's busy now."

"Well, we want to see him anyhow. Tell him two old friends from the firing line are here."

"No use," said the boy. "He's busy."

"Look here," exclaimed Hal. "Will you tell him, or shall I tell him myself?"

"I tell you you can't go in," said the boy.

Hal took the youngster by the shoulder with one hand and stood him aside.

"Come on, Chester," he said.

The boys walked through the door into a large room. Men in their shirtsleeves worked furiously at desks and typewriters. No one apparently had

time to take notice of the two boys. Hal approached one of them.

"Will you tell me where I can find Mr. Stubbs?" he asked.

The man jerked a thumb over his shoulder without even looking up.

Hal took the gesture to indicate a door marked private. He followed directions and walked in. Chester followed him. Inside was another man in shirtsleeves bent over a desk. It was not Stubbs. Hal approached.

"Can you tell me where I will find Mr. Stubbs?" he asked.

"You'll find him here when he's in," was the reply.

"Thanks," said Hal. "We'll wait."

The man glanced up for the first time and noted the uniforms the lads wore.

"Officers, eh?" he said. "Some of Stubbs' friends from the front?"

"Yes, sir."

"Just arrived?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good! Maybe you can give me a story."

"A what?"

"Story. Something about the war to print in the paper."

"Well, I don't know," said Hal. "We've just landed with a lot of other British and French offi-

cers. We've been sent to train some of the American troops."

The man at the desk jumped to his feet.

"That so?" he exclaimed. "That's what I call a good story."

He proceeded to question Hal, and the lad answered as best he could.

Suddenly the door opened and Anthony Stubbs stepped into the room. He recognized the two lads at first glance and jumped forward.

"Hal! Chester!" he cried, and embraced them both affectionately.

"I say, Stubbs," said Chester, "hold on a minute. You'll smother me. I didn't know you had adopted French customs."

Stubbs stepped back, somewhat abashed.

"I'm just glad to see you; that's all," he finally blurted out. "But when did you get here and what are you doing?"

"By the way, Stubbs," interrupted the gentleman at the desk, "aren't you going to introduce me to your friends? They've just been giving me the best story from the front that we've had since the war began."

Stubbs introduced the lads to "Mr. Andrews, managing editor." Then turning fiercely upon them he asked:

"What's this about a story?"

Hal explained.

"I see," said Stubbs with a sneer. "You're up to your old tricks of trying to get me into trouble."

"Trouble! What do you mean?" demanded Chester.

"So you're after my job, are you? Trying to get me fired," was the only explanation Stubbs vouchsafed.

"Say, Stubbs, what's the matter with you," interrupted Hal. "Are you losing your mind?"

"Not by a long shot," replied Stubbs; "but I haven't forgotten the time you took my job before, and almost had me shot. I'm onto you."

"Come, come, Mr. Stubbs," said Hal, "you know we don't want your job. Wouldn't have it, in fact."

"What's that?" demanded Stubbs. "Wouldn't have it, eh? What's the matter with my job, I'd like to know?"

"Well, there is too much snooping around into other people's business, for one thing," said Hal.

"Listen here," said Stubbs, "I've told you before I don't like that word 'snooping.' You listen to Anthony Stubbs. You had me over in that there war zone where I didn't have any rights, but you've got hold of a different Stubbs in New York City. You can't make me fight wild cats, and giants and things over here. If you try it, I'll call the police."

"Stubbs," said Chester, "it seems that we have caught you in a bad humor."

"Bad humor, nothing," said Stubbs. "This is my regular humor."

"I'll vouch for that," said Mr. Andrews in a soft voice.

Stubbs glared at him.

"Well," said Hal, "we don't seem to be very welcome, so we'll bid you good-bye."

"Hey!" said Stubbs. "What do you mean? Trying to get away without giving us the rest of that story."

"But I thought, Mr. Stubbs," said Hal, stammering, "that you were angry because I was telling Mr. Andrews about it."

"Well, I wasn't," said Stubbs.

"Look here, Stubbs," said Hal, suddenly growing angry. "Are you trying to have some fun with me?"

Stubbs grinned.

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because, if you are, it won't work."

"That so?" said Stubbs. "I can remember that you used to have a little fun with me. I was just trying it on you to see how you would like it. But I'll stop if you say so. Sit down and tell me about yourselves. You can give me the story later."

CHAPTER IX

WASHINGTON

"And so you are on your way to Washington," remarked Mr. Stubbs a few minutes later. "I wish I were going with you. How long do you expect to remain there?"

"Haven't the slightest idea," replied Hal; "but we're anxious to get back on the firing line with a bunch of Americans behind us."

"I should think you'd had enough of that," ventured Stubbs.

"Oh, I don't know. How about you, Mr. Stubbs?" queried Chester.

"That's different," replied the little man. "I have to go if I want to hold my job; haven't I, Mr. Andrews."

"Undoubtedly," replied the managing editor. "However, if you don't want to go, I might find someone else."

"Hear that?" said Stubbs with a grin.

"Well," said Hal, "I'm not at all sure you'll go back."

"Why not?"

"I hear that war correspondents are not to be allowed with the United States army."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Andrews. "Do you think

the government would play us a trick like that?"

"I wouldn't be a bit surprised," replied Chester. "War correspondents haven't always been in good odor with the allied commanders. Stubbs has done very well, I believe, but it looks as though the days of war correspondents are about over."

Stubbs grew angry.

"Well," he growled; "I said I was going back over there and I mean it. If I can't go as a war correspondent, by George, I'll enlist!"

"What! You enlist?" demanded Hal incredulously.

"Why not?" demanded the war correspondent. "D'you think I'm afraid?"

"Why—why, I don't know, Stubbs," stammered Chester. "I thought——"

"Don't forget there are wildcats and things over there, Stubbs," Hal interrupted. The lad turned to Mr. Andrews. "Did Stubbs ever tell you," he asked, "how he overcame three wildcats in mortal combat?"

"Why, no," returned Mr. Andrews; "he didn't tell me he did any fighting over there. Come, Stubbs, let's hear about it."

Stubbs gazed at the two lads angrily.

"Think you're smart, don't you?" he cried. "Don't pay any attention to them," he said to Mr. Andrews. "They don't know what they are talking about."

"Don't you believe it, sir," said Hal. "With my own eyes I saw Mr. Stubbs here dispose of three wildcats single handed."

"I can vouch for it," said Chester. "I was there, too."

"Come, now, Stubbs," said Mr. Andrews. "Don't be so modest."

"I believe it would make a good article for your Sunday paper," said Chester to the managing editor.

"By George! You're right," declared Mr Andrews. "Picture of Stubbs and the wildcats and all that sort of thing. You give me the details and I'll call in the artist and let him draw up something."

Mr. Andrews moved toward the door. Stubbs barred his way.

"Hold on a minute, now," he cried. "You don't get any picture of me in this paper, you can bet on that. You're a couple of fine friends" this sarcastically to Hal and Chester.

"By George, Stubbs," said Mr. Andrews, "you do them an injustice. Just because your own modesty keeps you silent, is no reason the details of your struggle with the wildcats should be concealed. I'll bet it would make good reading."

"It certainly would, sir," agreed Hal with a smile.

Stubbs grinned, too. He had a sense of humor.

"Oh, it would make good reading," he declared, "but I don't want to move out of this town yet; if that story were printed, my life wouldn't be safe in this office."

"Something queer about that story," said Mr. Andrews, half aloud.

"Something very queer, sir," agreed Chester.

"I've got it!" said Mr. Andrews suddenly. "You mean Stubbs thought he had a battle with three wildcats."

"That's more like it, sir," grinned Chester.

"Stubbs," said Mr. Andrews, "I thought you told me you had quit drinking?"

Stubbs started.

"Drinking?" he exclaimed. "I don't drink."

"How do you account for them wildcats, then?" demanded the managing editor, forgetting his grammar.

"By Jove!" said Stubbs to Hal and Chester, "did you fellows come all the way to New York just to get me in trouble? I'll be blowed if it doesn't look like it."

Hal, believing that the joke had gone far enough, hastened to explain the circumstances to Mr. Andrews. The managing editor laughed long and loudiy, the while Stubbs squirmed uneasily in his seat.

"Well, what else was a fellow to do?" he demanded.

"To my way of thinking," said Mr. Andrews, "you did perfectly right, Stubbs. No cats, wild or tame, for yours truly. No, sir. Well, you must excuse me now. I'll have to get to work. Stubbs, I'll leave the story of these lads' arrival to you."

The managing editor turned to his desk and was soon buried in a stack of papers.

The boys talked to Stubbs for perhaps half an hour longer and then Hal rose.

"We've got to leave early in the morning, Stubbs," he said, "so I guess we had better turn in."

Chester and Stubbs also got to their feet.

"I'm awfully glad to have seen you boys again," said Stubbs. "You'll probably be in this country for some months. Let me know where to find you when you get located and I'll try to run down and see you."

"We shall certainly do that, Stubbs," declared Chester warmly. "In the meantime, we shall drop in on you any time we happen to find ourselves in New York."

"If you don't," declared Stubbs, "there will be trouble."

They shook hands all around and the boys took their departure.

At their hotel the boys found two telegrams. These proved to be from Mrs. Paine and Mrs. Crawford. Both read alike:

"Will be in Washington Friday."

"And this," said Hal, "is Wednesday. They are not wasting any time."

"I should say not," agreed Chester. "But I'll bet they won't be any more glad to see us than we will be to see them."

It was after a good night's rest that the boys found themselves the following morning aboard a Pennsylvania train bound for the nation's capital. Aboard were several others who had crossed with them, also carrying credentials to the British minister in Washington.

"It's been so long since I have been in Washington," said Hal, "that I don't know whether I shall be able to find my way about."

"Well," said Chester, "we have tongues; therefore we are not helpless."

It was after 1 o'clock when the train pulled into the station in Washington. During the trip, Hal, Chester and the other officers aboard had agreed to go together to the British Embassy. Accordingly, they sought sufficient taxicabs and soon were whirling away toward their destination.

"Prettiest city in the world," said Hal, as they sped along.

"Right you are," agreed Chester. "I tell you it seems good to be back in the United States after all these years."

"Rather," said Hal dryly.

"It undoubtedly seems good to you," put in one

of the British officers, "but you must remember that the rest of us are strangers in a strange land."

"You won't be strangers long," declared Chester. "You will find that the American people will make you feel perfectly at home."

"I have no doubt of it," replied the British officer.

A ride of perhaps fifteen minutes brought them to the British legation. They mounted the steps quickly and passed within.

An under secretary greeted them.

"The ambassador has been apprised of your coming," said the secretary. "He is busy at this moment, but he will be at leisure within the hour."

He placed chairs for them and disappeared.

It was less than half an hour later that the British ambassador appeared. There was joy in his face as his eyes fell upon the British uniforms. He advanced with a quick step and shook hands with each man heartily.

"It does me good to see you here!" he exclaimed. "I have awaited your arrival impatiently. I was fearful that something would happen on your way across. Now, as a matter of form, I shall look at your credentials."

He examined one after another the papers extended to him.

"All satisfactory," he said at length. His eyes rested upon Hal and Chester. "So you are the two

young Americans who have done so much for our cause," he said. "I am indeed glad to know you. I have had especial word of your coming, and I am instructed to take you to the secretary of state at the earliest possible moment."

"Thank you, sir," said Hal and Chester.

The ambassador turned to his countrymen.

"I have arranged quarters for you," he said. "My secretary will see that you are taken care of." He turned again to Hal and Chester. "I have an appointment with Mr. Lansing at 3 o'clock," he said. "I shall be glad to have you accompany me. In the meantime, if you care to look about the city, it is your privilege. But return here by half-past two."

The two lads again thanked the ambassador and announced that they would stroll about until the appointed hour.

"By Jove!" said Chester, when they were outside, "our fame seems to have preceded us. We're in luck."

CHAPTER X

A BIT OF HISTORY

WHILE Hal and Chester are strolling about the city awaiting the hour of their appointment with the British ambassador, it will be well to relate, briefly, a few of the events leading up to the situation in the United States as it stood the third week in April, 1917.

As has been seen earlier in this story, President Wilson had signed the declaration that a state of war existed with the German government on April 6. Immediately thereafter the war machinery of the nation was set in motion.

There at once came whispers that the President would not only call for volunteers, as had been the case in previous wars, but that he would immediately ask Congress to pass a conscription bill—calling to the colors all men within a certain age limit and physically fit. In fact, such a law was made, though not until some time later, and was termed the Selective Service law.

One of the first steps following the declaration of war was the opening of training camps in various parts of the country for young men who sought commissions in the army. These were known as reserve officers' training camps. It was upon these

young men Uncle Sam would depend, when the time came, to fill vacancies in the regular army and to officer the new national army that was to be raised by conscription—or draft, as it was called.

Special campaigns to add impetus to enlisting in the regular army, the navy, the marine corps and any number of special branches of the service were launched in all parts of the United States and from the first met with uniform success. The United States army was brought to war strength on short notice.

But this was not enough. The army at war strength stood far behind armies of other nations both in quality and quantity. The National Guard of the various states, recently mustered out following their return from the Mexican border, again were called into the government service, and preparations were being made to send them to various training camps. It was realized by the Federal authorities that the United States forces at that time—brave and well trained though they were—were not fit to be sent to France at a moment's notice. They were practically ignorant of methods of warfare in vogue in Europe.

Therefore, a course of training was prescribed. Even this, it was realized, would not be sufficient, and there was no question that the first contingent of United States regulars to go into France would have to undergo a course of special training before

being sent to the firing line. It was apparent that the British and French general staffs would not care to entrust to raw troops important positions at the front.

Government machinery was being set in motion along other lines. Efforts were being made to speed up ship building to take the place of vessels destroyed by German submarines. The loss in tonnage through this arm of the enemy had been tremendous, and war conferences of the allied nations were being held frequently in an effort to hit upon some plan of successfully combating the underseas peril. Now, for the first time, representatives of the United States were about to take seats at these council tables.

That an American fleet would be sent almost immediately to join British and French squadrons in the war zone was admitted, and the nation waited daily for news that such a fleet had reached European waters. Because of the strict censorship placed upon the movement of all vessels from American ports, there would be no announcement of the sailing of an American fleet. The first word of such a movement would be when the fleet had joined the allies.

And at last the word came.

A fleet of American destroyers, under command of Admiral Mayo, had run successfully the German blockade of submarines and had joined the British

grand fleet. There was rejoicing in the United States.

The question now arose as to who would command the first contingent of American troops to be sent abroad. The man generally mentioned for this honor was Major-General Frederick Funston, of Philippine fame—the man who, single-handed, captured the Filipino outlaw, Aguinaldo.

Came word suddenly of General Funston's death in San Antonio, Texas.

The nation was profoundly grieved, and there arose the question of who would be his successor.

At length his successor was named—and the nation agreed that the man selected to lead the first American troops to France had been well chosen. He was the man who so recently had led American expeditionary forces into Mexico in pursuit of the bandit Villa—Major-General John J. Pershing—"Black Jack" Pershing, he was called by his men.

These matters settled, the nation turned its eyes ahead to the day when American troops would cross the water preparing for the struggle.

Opposition to the war cropped up in Congress and threatened for a time to tie the hands of the President. But this group of men, a dozen or so senators and a larger number of representatives, were finally deprived of their power and war preparations went forward faster than before.

In various parts of the country opposition to the

war also developed—chiefly as the result of German intrigue carried on in America for the three years of the European war by agents of the German Emperor. Several large muntions plants were blown up in a mysterious manner. Investigation proved the explosions to have been the work of German agents.

The government increased its corps of special agents, the better to keep track of suspects. All plants, rivers and bridges in the country were placed under heavy guard. These special agents of the government succeeded in arresting many enemy aliens suspected of plotting against the United States.

So extensive had been the work of German spies, it soon developed, that stringent rules were laid down for all citizens of German or Austrian birth. These men were warned to keep away from munition plants and similar places and to surrender whatever arms they possessed to the authorities.

As an indication of how Germany had plotted against the United States even before the American government declared war, President Wilson made public documents showing that the Kaiser, through accredited agents in Washington and the City of Mexico, had sought to embroil Mexico and Japan in a war upon the United States. Proposals had been made to Japan that the Nipponese desert their allies and join Germany in her aims of world con-

quest. To Mexico, for participation in the war, the Kaiser offered Texas, Arizona and New Mexico.

Thanks to the activities of special agents of the United States government, this plot was discovered before it had time to bear fruit. Papers setting forth the plot in detail fell into the hands of American authorities. The conspiracy was crushed. Denials made by the German ambassador in Washington and the German government itself did not fool the people of the United States. They realized then, as never before, the extent to which the Kaiser and his henchmen had gone to stir dissension in America, as well as throughout the rest of the world.

Such was the situation, then, when Hal, Chester and other British officers arrived in America to lend their assistance to the American government in preparing Uncle Sam's fighting men for service at the seat of war.

Hal and Chester returned to the British embassy at the time appointed. The ambassador made his appearance a few moments later and the three were soon whirling through the broad streets of the capital toward the state department.

"The secretary of state is awaiting you, sir," said an attendant to the British ambassador as the three entered the ante-chamber. The ambassador bowed, and, motioning the lads to follow him, entered the private office of the secretary of state.

Mr. Lansing rose from his chair as the three

entered. He shook hands with the ambassador and then looked inquiringly at Hal and Chester.

"These young officers," said the ambassador, "are the young men you asked to have brought to you as soon as they arrived. Captains Paine and Crawford, Americans, but of His British Majesty's service, sir."

Secretary Lansing stepped forward quickly and extended a hand to Hal and Chester in turn.

"I am indeed glad to see you," he said. "I have heard much of you during the three years of war. You see, we are kept pretty well posted here as to what is going on abroad. I am sure that you will be glad to turn whatever knowledge you may have gained on the other side to the advantage of your countrymen."

"Nothing will give us greater pleasure, sir," replied Hal quietly.

"Good. Now if you will retire to the other room for a moment, I shall talk to you later. I have some important business with the British ambassador."

The lads bowed and left the room.

"By Jove!" said Hal. "Looks as though he might have something important for us to do."

"Right," agreed Chester, and added: "As I said before, we seem to be in luck."

CHAPTER XI

AN ADVENTURE

The British ambassador emerged from his conference with Secretary Lansing about fifteen minutes later.

"Mr. Lansing will see you now," he said to the two lads, and added: "I hope that you will make it convenient to stop and see me before you leave the city."

He shook hands with Hal and Chester and took his departure.

The lads entered the secretary's office. Secretary Lansing motioned them to chairs. The boys sat down.

"Now," said the secretary of state, "we may talk at our leisure. I suppose you are familiar with conditions as they exist in the United States today?"

"Somewhat, sir," returned Hal. "We read the papers and try to keep as well posted as possible."

"Good. Then you are aware that training camps have been established in various parts of the country where young aspirants for commissions will be put through several months of intensive training. Our conscription camps will be established later, and there will be work there, too, for experienced officers. Very few men who will go to the officers'

training camps have had any military experience whatever, although there probably will be some who will come from the National Guard units of the several states. These, of course, will have knowledge of the rudiments of army life, but they probably will have much to learn. Now, what I want you two boys to do is to give your services at one of these camps. Will that be agreeable to you?"

"Perfectly, sir," replied Chester quietly.

"Very good, then. In that event, of course, it will be necessary to obtain commissions for you in the United States army. That will take time. Such appointments have to be approved by Congress after the appointments have been made by the President. It is only a matter of form, however, and the waiting period can be waived if necessary. The recommendations will be made by General Scott, chief of staff. I shall send you to him with proper credentials. You will go to whatever training camp he designates. Is this entirely satisfactory to you?"

"Perfectly so, sir," Hal said.

"Very well. I shall give you the credentials now."

Secretary Lansing turned to his desk and wrote rapidly for a few moments. Then he extended documents to the lads.

"Present these to General Scott at his office in the war department as soon as possible," he instructed.

Hal and Chester arose and took the papers. Mr. Lansing also got to his feet.

"We shall present them at once, sir," said Hal.

The secretary of state bowed, intimating that the interview was ended. Hal and Chester left the room.

An hour later they stood before Major-General Hugh Scott, the President's chief of staff. The latter rapidly scanned the papers they had given him.

"With such credentials as these," the general remarked a moment later as he gave the boys a glance of admiration, "I could not refuse to recommend your appointments as first lieutenants if I desired. We need good soldiers too badly. I can assure you that your commissions will be granted as soon as I can bring the matter to the attention of the secretary of war. Of course you understand that they must eventually be approved by Congress.

"However," continued the general, "you doubtless will be called upon before they have been approved. I shall let you know immediately we have need of you. The training camp at Fort Niagara will open Tuesday. That will give you several days of liberty, for it will be at Fort Niagara that you will find your work. Where may I reach you?"

Hal considered a moment.

"At the Shoreham hotel, sir," he replied finally.

"Very well," said General Scott and turned to his desk.

The boys saluted and took their departure.

"Well," said Hal when they were again on the street, "we know where we are going at any rate."

"That's something," agreed Chester. "What are we going to do now?"

"We'll go to the hotel, secure a room, and have our traps sent up from the station. The sooner we are installed some place the better."

They followed this decision and a short time later were comfortably installed in the Shoreham.

"Hal," said Chester suddenly, "how are we going to find our mothers when they arrive? We don't know what time they will get here nor where they will stop."

Hal smiled.

"That is why we are putting up at this hotel," he explained. "Our family always stops at the Shoreham when in Washington and Mother will naturally look for us here."

Having made their minds easy on this score the boys left the hotel and spent several hours in strolling about the city, and early in the evening dropped in at a well-known Pennsylvania avenue restaurant for dinner.

The place was crowded with diners, among whom were many men in uniform, and strangers from all parts of the world. In fact, it was as cosmopolitan a gathering as could be found in any of the capitals of Europe, such a change had the entry of the

United States into the great world conflict made in the character of the city.

Suddenly, as they were finishing their meal, Hal gave a little start, and leaning over to Chester whispered: "I smell a German."

Chester looked up in surprise.

"What do you mean—you smell a German?" he demanded.

"Well," said Hal, "I haven't put in three years fighting them for nothing. You look around this room, and if you don't catch my meaning I will lose all hope for you."

Chester glanced about the room. The tables were all comfortably filled. Far back in a corner, almost directly behind the table at which the lads were seated—Chester's back was toward the table—sat a party of four men. They were men well along in years, from the boys' point of view—possibly forty. Three wore mustaches and one a full beard. They sat erect, and to Chester it was plain that they at least had some military training. Chester turned to Hal.

"I smell four Germans," he said quietly.

"We may be wrong," said Hal, "but the cut of those four fellows reminds me of German military officers. I'll find out."

He signaled their waiter.

"Can you tell me who those four gentlemen are?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," was the prompt reply. "One of them —the one with the beard—is an attache of the Austrian legation. The others are members of the Swedish ambassador's retinue."

"Thanks," said Hal, and added to Chester: "Member of the Austrian legation, eh? Well, what's he doing here?"

"You must remember that we have not declared war on Austria—yet," responded Chester.

"That's so," said Hal. "I didn't stop to think. I figured that if we were at war with Germany we were at war with all her allies. At the same time, the way those fellows put their heads together and talk in whispers, I'll warrant they're up to no good."

Chester shrugged his shoulders—a gesture he had learned in France. "Perhaps not," he made reply; "but, at the same time, there is no law that says they are forbidden to dine in public."

"But why are they so thick with the Swedes?" Hal wanted to know.

"Too deep for me," said Chester.

At that moment an orchestra half concealed behind an improvised forest of palms broke into the strains of "The Star Spangled Banner."

Hal and Chester sprang to their feet and stood at attention. Others of the diners also stood. Even the party at the table behind the boys got to their feet as a mark of respect to the American flag. But

Hal, gazing at them, noticed that each made a grimace.

"Swedish or not," the lad told himself, "they have no love for the United States."

When the orchestra became silent a burst of applause followed and then the diners resumed their seats.

Hal had just paid the check and the two boys were about to go, when Chester, having just got to his feet, heard something that made his blood boil. The four men at the next table sat each with a hand on a glass of wine. The bearded man, leaning slightly across the table and speaking in a voice he apparently believed none would overhear, said in a firm voice:

"To the day, Gentlemen! Destruction to the United States and to its president, the prince of all meddlers!"

Chester wheeled like a flash, took a step forward and grasped the bearded man by the shoulder.

"Coward! Spy!" he said in a low calm voice.

The man sprang to his feet and started to speak, but Chester struck him a smart blow with the back of his hand, which closed his lips and which could be heard by all in the immediate neighborhood.

The bearded man took a quick step backward.

His companions sprang to their feet, while Hal, ignorant of the cause of the trouble and believing

that Chester had lost his senses, nevertheless advanced to his friend's assistance.

After striking the bearded man, Chester's hand had dropped to his side. He now stood quietly, eyeing the man steadily.

Suddenly the bearded man's rage burst forth.

"You shall pay for that!" he cried, as he whipped out a revolver.

Men and women sprang to their feet on all sides. In an instant the room was in an uproar.

CHAPTER XII

THE PLOT THICKENS

A WAR-TIME crowd in any city, and particularly in the national capital, is a fickle and excitable gathering; and the one which had assembled in the restaurant was no exception to the rule.

Seeing two officers in the British uniform—a uniform now familiar in Washington—confronting a man of such unmistakably German appearance, with a revolver in his hand, immediate hostilities were naturally expected. Women screamed and all those—both men and women—in the immediate vicinity sought places of safety; while a few, wearing the United States uniform, crowded forward to see what was the matter.

The man whom Chester had slapped was foaming with rage, but his companions were a little more calm, although they, too, were much excited.

"Be careful," whispered one of them in German, as he laid his hand upon the bearded man's arm. "You will spoil everything."

Hal caught these low-spoken words and realized in an instant that Chester must have overheard something to rouse him to anger.

The bearded man, thus enjoined by his companion, hesitated; but still he kept Chester covered with

his revolver. Apparently he was loath to spare the lad who had struck him.

Hal took advantage of his momentary indecision, however, sprang forward, and with a quick movement of his arm, sent the revolver spinning from the bearded man's hand. The latter whirled upon him.

"So!" he exclaimed in a voice deep with emotion, "you are in this, too, eh?"

"I'm not going to see my friend shot," replied Hal quietly.

The bearded man took a threatening step forward.

"Stay where you are," said Hal in a low voice. He turned to Chester. "Now, what's the meaning of this?" he demanded.

Chester recounted in a few words what he had overheard. His voice carried to those nearby, and these repeated the lad's words to the diners in far parts of the room. Angry voices rose on all sides.

"Lynch 'em!" shouted a voice from the rear of the room.

"Beat 'em up!" exclaimed a second voice.

The crowd surged forward toward the quartette. Waiters scurried for safety as angry men advanced.

The four men were in a ticklish situation, and they realized it. The anger of an American crowd was not to be held lightly.

The men stepped quickly backwards. The crowd surged after them.

Hal and Chester faced the angry mob.

"Wait!" cried the former. "Do not make matters worse. Let some one call the police."

The men in front realized the common sense in the lad's words and a man in the rear of the room dashed out to follow Hal's injunction.

With the knowledge that they were about to be placed under arrest, the four conspirators determined upon a desperate plan. They held a whispered conference.

Then the three men termed Swedes suddenly produced revolvers. The bearded man had none. His still lay across the room where Hal had knocked it.

"Out of our way," exclaimed one of the plotters. "Out of our way or we fire!"

Facing the mouth of a loaded revolver is not a pleasant feeling; and as the four men moved forward the crowd gave back.

Hal and Chester, of course, were also unarmed. They had not felt the necessity of carrying their weapons in a peaceable city like Washington, so there was nothing for them to do but stand aside.

The four plotters made their way quickly toward the door. There was not a man in the room who raised a hand to stop them. The one who had gone in search of the police apparently had not been successful in finding an officer.

But as the four were about to pass out the door, one diner, bolder, or perhaps more foolish than the rest, picked up a heavy plate and sent it skimming across the room toward the plotters. The bearded man avoided the missile by dodging quickly, but this act of hostility had its effect upon one of the others.

He turned his revolver, and, taking quick aim at the man who had hurled the plate, fired. The man sank down between the tables with a groan.

Instantly other men in the room forgot the revolvers in the hands of the four conspirators. They sprang forward, Hal and Chester with them.

The former, pushing his way through the crowd, found himself suddenly facing the mouth of a revolver. The lad ducked instinctively as the man pulled the trigger and was unharmed. He came up under the other's arms, and with a quick movement, possessed himself of the weapon. Then he stepped back a pace and covered his opponent.

The other conspirators, in the meantime, had disappeared. To the man who remained, Hal ordered: "Throw up your hands!"

There was nothing the man could do but obey. His hands went high in the air. The crowd surged around him with angry cries.

There was no doubt in Hal's mind that every one was in a desperate mood. He rushed the captured plotter into a corner and took his stand in

front of him. Then the lad threw up one hand with a commanding gesture.

"Wait a minute!" he exclaimed.

The crowd halted.

"Think what you are about, men!" Hal cried. "You don't want this man's blood on your hands. Besides, the government authorities will want to question him. He may reveal details of a plot that will save the nation."

"The boy is right!" exclaimed a man in uniform in the forefront of the crowd. "Stand back, men!"

There was still some grumbling, but the crowd drew off. Hal breathed easier, for he had determined to protect his prisoner at all hazards. None in the room realized better than the lad the importance of turning the man over to the government authorities unharmed.

At that moment the man who had left the room in search of the police rushed in, closely followed by half a dozen officers. The latter took charge of Hal's prisoner, and, after taking the names of Hal and Chester and others in the room, four of them marched the prisoner off while the other two remained to look after the man who had been wounded, and to investigate the cause of the trouble.

A hasty examination disclosed that the man was not dangerously wounded, having sustained only a flesh wound in his right arm. Then the police lieutenant in charge of the squad questioned Hal and

Chester at some length, noted the names and addresses of several present and finally took his departure.

"We have had suspicion that all was not right in Washington for some time," the lieutenant remarked as he was leaving, "but this is the first case of open treachery. Drastic steps to rid the city of such people will soon be taken," a prediction which was verified some time later when the president issued a proclamation ordering all alien enemies from the capital.

"Glad we were able to help you out," said Hal quietly.

"Same here," laughed the lieutenant. "If you stumble on to anything more, just call on me."

Hal replied that they surely would, and, securing their caps, the boys left the restaurant, which by this time was again being put in order by the waiters.

"I expect I should have given the lieutenant this revolver," remarked Hal as they walked along, indicating the weapon he had wrenched from the Swede. "He might need it."

"Better keep it," replied Chester, "as it seems we can find trouble wherever we go."

"You mean you can," laughed Hal.

"Oh, I don't know. I heard the remark, but it was you who smelled the German."

"Well, I hope I don't smell any more for a while.

I have had plenty of excitement for one day."

"Here, too, Hal! Let's put in the rest of the evening quietly."

But, as it transpired, Hal and Chester were to have still more stirring adventures before the night was over.

For an hour or so they strolled about the well-lighted streets of the capital, then stopped in one of the moving picture shows on Ninth street, and it was well after 11 o'clock when they started back to the hotel.

Instead of retracing their steps and returning by way of brilliantly lighted Pennsylvania avenue, they walked on Ninth street to H street and then headed for the hotel, which was on the same street, six blocks north.

The street was not so well lighted as the down-town streets. Suddenly Hal stopped. He had heard hurrying footsteps behind them.

A man brushed past.

The lads continued on their way.

A few moments later came other hurrying footsteps behind them. Again the lads slowed down, and Hal laid his hand on his revolver. After their experience in the restaurant they had no mind to be caught unprepared, and fresh from the battlefront as they were, they saw danger in every figure that approached from behind them.

"Guess we are as foolish as a couple of old

women," said Hal with a laugh. "No one is going to bother us here."

At that moment they were crossing Twelfth street. Three forms appeared suddenly from nowhere, and before the boys could offer resistance, a revolver butt crashed down on the head of each.

Hal toppled to the street and lay still. So did Chester.

CHAPTER XIII

UNCLE SAM TAKES A HAND

Colonel Waldron, commandant of the army post at Fort Myer, directly across the Potomac river from Washington, was just about to retire after eighteen hours' hard work, when the telephone in his quarters rang.

Turning to answer it he noted that it was five minutes after midnight.

"Colonel Waldron's quarters," he said into the 'phone, thinking at the same time how tired he was.

But the words that came over the 'phone drove all thoughts of weariness from his mind.

"This is the officer of the day," said a voice. "The corporal of the guard has under arrest two men, foreigners, who have in their care a wounded man wearing the uniform of a captain in the English army. I would put them all in the guard-house until morning, only the wounded man needs medical attention."

"See that he gets it at once," ordered the colonel, "and bring the others to me."

"Yes, sir!" and the telephone shut off with a snap.

Five minutes later the officer of the day, accom-

panied by a corporal and four regulars, conducted the two prisoners into the colonel's presence.

"Where did you arrest them?" was Colonel Waldron's first question.

"Just after they crossed the aqueduct bridge from Washington," replied the corporal.

"Give me the details."

"Wilson, here," said the corporal, nodding his head toward one of the privates, "was standing guard at the bridge. An automobile came across at a pretty fair speed until it reached the end of the bridge, when it stopped and one of the prisoners got out.

" 'What do you want?' asked Wilson, coming forward.

" 'We want to go to some church,' was the reply.

"That seemed a mighty strange reply, but upon questioning him further Wilson discovered that he wanted to go to Falls Church, Va. He gave the direction and was about to let the machine pass, when he heard a man groan in the automobile.

" 'What's that?' asked Wilson, pricking up his ears.

" 'It's my sick son,' was the reply. 'I'm taking him to his mother.'

"It seemed mighty funny to Wilson that if the man was taking his son to his mother he wouldn't know the way, so he took a look into the machine.

The wounded man's uniform caught his eye and he called me—and here they are."

Colonel Waldron eyed the prisoners sternly.

"What is your name?" he inquired of the man who had been designated as the father by the corporal.

"John Smith," was the reply, given in broken English.

"Hans Schmidt would be a good deal nearer it," exclaimed Colonel Waldron. "You are a German."

"No, sir! I am a Swedish-American."

"A Swedish-American, eh? Well, I've no use for hyphenates. And the man in the English uniform is your son?"

"Yes, sir; but he is an American."

"How does he come to be wearing the British uniform?"

"He has been fighting with the allies."

"Oh, he has," and Colonel Waldron's face softened a little. "Well, you just stay here with the corporal and I'll go and have a look at him."

Followed by the officer of the day Colonel Waldron proceeded at once to the hospital.

"Where's the wounded English officer," he asked as he entered the hospital building.

"In the dispensary, sir," replied the orderly.

"How is he?"

"I just heard the surgeon say he was better. I think he has come to himself."

The information was correct, and as Colonel Waldron entered the dispensary the wounded man was sitting up on the operating table and looking inquiringly about.

Seeing the colonel enter, his hand came to a salute, but it was not a very satisfactory effort.

Colonel Waldron smiled as he returned the salute, and said in a kindly voice:

'You seem to have met with an accident, Captain."

"It looks that way," was the reply; "but where was it, and how did I come here?"

"Your father was taking——"

"My father! Say, Colonel, who do you think I am?"

"The son of John Smith, a Swedish-American."

"Swedish!" exclaimed the wounded man. "That's it! That brings me back to myself. No, I'm not the son of John Smith, a Swedish-American. I'm Chester Crawford, full-blown American, for the time being serving as Captain in the English army until I get my commission from Uncle Sam, which I have been promised by Gen. Scott."

Then as he slid off the table and stood erect upon his feet: "But where is this Swedish-American father of mine? Don't let him escape, if you are all what you seem to be!"

"We are exactly that, and your words, Captain, confirm my suspicions that all is not right."

"Well, I should say not," declared Chester, and

he briefly related the events of the early evening. "But what do you suppose has become of my friend?"

"We shall promptly make it our business to find out," declared Colonel Waldron. "Lieutenant," turning to the officer of the day, "'phone at once to the Shoreham and see if Captain Paine is in; also at once to Washington police headquarters, and see if anyone has made inquiries concerning Captain Crawford. There is no time to be wasted. Report to me at my quarters, as soon as possible, where Captain Crawford and I will now go and interview Mr. 'John Smith, Swedish-American,' and his interesting friend."

Without delay, the colonel and Chester returned to Colonel Waldron's quarters, where they found the prisoners securely guarded.

"And which of these interesting gentlemen is my father?" queried Chester, as he came into their presence.

Colonel Waldron indicated the one who had so styled himself.

"Very good," laughed Chester. "So you are my father, eh? And what has become of my bewhiskered Austrian friend who was with you at dinner to-night?"

Neither the man addressed by Chester, nor the other prisoner made any response; but the looks they bent upon the boy were intended to be deadly.

"Well," continued Chester, "if you won't tell me that, perhaps you will tell me if you know anything about my friend."

The prisoners exchanged a knowing glance, which was not lost upon either Colonel Waldron or Chester, and gave the latter a sinking sensation. He was satisfied that they were desperate men, and would not hesitate to do even worse to Hal than to him.

"They must be made to tell," he said to the colonel.

"Never fear; they will be," declared Colonel Waldron. "Is it one of these who shot the man in the restaurant?"

"Yes, sir; that one," and Chester indicated the man who had not yet spoken since he had been brought in.

"His willingness to tell what he knows may be the one way in which he will be able to escape hanging. You can not shoot men with impunity in the restaurants of Washington."

The pallor which spread itself over the prisoner's face showed that the colonel's shot had struck home.

"What is to be done with them?" asked Chester.

"I shall put them into the guardhouse until morning, when I shall turn them over to the Department of Justice, which is looking for just such individuals. These are the kind of men who are destroying

bridges, and blowing up munition factories. Uncle Sam has been pretty easy with them so far, but he is now through with fooling. I think——"

His speech was interrupted by the entrance of the officer of the day, who said that the assault upon Chester and Hal had been reported to police headquarters by a pedestrian, who chanced to be crossing the little parkway formed by the junction of H street, Thirteenth street and New York avenue. He said the assault was made by three men. A patrol wagon was at once rushed to the scene, but no trace of the assaulted men could be found.

"Undoubtedly, then," declared Colonel Waldron, "the third man has undertaken to dispose of your friend; but have no fear, Captain. This is not Germany, or Russia, and the criminals will be speedily brought to bay."

"I have no fear," was Chester's reply. "Hal is fully able to take care of himself; but I must do all I can."

"Well, I do not think there is anything you can do to-night, and I am going to insist upon your sharing my quarters. Get a good sleep so that you will be fit to-morrow."

Much as he disliked to follow the advice, there seemed nothing else to do, and so Chester took himself to bed, after seeing the corporal depart with his prisoners.

"If anything serious happens to my friend," he

said, as a parting shot, "both of you will have to pay for it."

Wearied as he was, and weakened by the blow he had received, it was past mid-day when Chester awoke on the following day. In fact, he might have slept longer, but he was aroused by Colonel Waldron himself, who came to announce that he had been in communication with General Scott and Adjutant General McCain during the morning, and that everything possible was being done to locate Hal. Colonel Waldron also announced that commissions as first lieutenants had been issued by the adjutant general's office to both Chester and Hal only an hour before.

"And I should not be surprised," continued the colonel, "if both were approved by congress before the day is done. At any rate, you are now practically an officer of Uncle Sam, and I have secured for you an American uniform in place of the one you have been wearing. I am sure you will do just as great honor to it as to the one you are now discarding."

Chester blushed becomingly, and replied modestly that he would do his best.

"I have no doubt of it," declared the colonel, "and I only wish that you were to be assigned to my regiment here instead of being sent to the officers' training school at Fort Niagara, although I can see that you and your friend are just the kind of chaps to

put pep into the young officers whom you will help to train."

"They've all got the pep in them," laughed Chester. "All it needs is to be brought out."

CHAPTER XIV

HAL PROVES HIS COURAGE

When Hal opened his eyes, he found himself in a dimly lighted room, which was unfamiliar to him. At first the lad was unable to recall what had happened, but gradually he remembered seeing men sneaking up on him, and such of the details of the assault as he had seen came back to him.

"Must have got me from behind," he mused.

He tried to move and, then, for the first time, discovered that he was sitting bolt upright in a chair, to which he was firmly tied. Both feet were bound to the legs of the chair, and his arms were securely fastened behind the back.

"They sure have me trussed up good and tight," he muttered to himself, as he struggled vainly to loosen himself. Then, after a pause: "I wonder what they did to Chester."

He remained quiet for some minutes trying to figure out some way of freeing himself, but none came to his mind. Here he was, totally unable to help himself in the slightest.

"I suspect that my friend with the beard is at the bottom of this," he thought, "but why should he go to all this trouble? I don't know anything about him or his plots. Probably this is his idea of get-

ting even. Oh, well; all's fair in love and war," with which bit of wisdom Hal was fain to content himself.

Another quarter of an hour dragged slowly by, and then Hal heard footsteps outside. A moment later the door to the room opened and a man, wearing a mask, entered, and stood in front of him.

"Well," said Hal, after a few minutes of silence, "now that you have seen me, how do you like me?"

The man made no reply, but stood motionless, as though undecided what to do or say.

"Must be deaf and dumb," muttered Hal, as though to himself. "Well, the less some folks say the more credit they get for knowing something."

"Bah!" exclaimed the man. "You make me sick."

"If I were not tied up like this," exclaimed Hal with a touch of temper, "I'd make you sicker, you numbskull!"

"You'd better keep a civil tongue in your head," growled the man in the mask. "Now listen, I want to ask you a few questions."

"Fire away," said Hal; "but I'd feel more like answering if I were not tied up so tight."

The man considered a moment.

"I'll free your arms," he finally said, and he proceeded to untie the hard knots.

"Seems to me I've seen you before," remarked Hal, as his captor struggled with the bonds.

"Perhaps you have," was the gruff reply.

"I'm perfectly sure of it," insisted Hal, as he felt the rope loosen and his right hand come free, "and I could even tell you where. Just to prove it, I'll ask you to take off your mask."

With a quick movement, Hal seized the mask and tore it from his captor's face, revealing the face of the bearded man, whom Chester had chastised in the restaurant.

"You shall pay for this!" shouted the man, as he straightened to his feet. "You have insult——"

"Why all these heroics?" sneered Hal, interrupting the speech.

"Silence!" thundered the man.

"Say," queried Hal, "who do you think you are? The Kaiser?"

"I'm an Austrian, I'd have you know. I am the Count Frederick von Leipsicburger."

"The Count von Limberger, eh?"

"Leipsicburger, not Limberger," thundered the count once more.

"All burgers sound alike, yes, and smell alike to me," declared Hal. "They all have that rich, greasy, Teuton flavor. And besides, if you are Austrian, as you claim, what business have you giving orders?"

"What business," sputtered the angry Austrian. "And why shouldn't I give orders, eh? I'm the Count of——"

"Oh, I heard all that," said Hal with a disdain-

ful wave of the hand, "but surely you are aware that an Austrian is no longer master of his own soul. You don't even have the right to think for yourselves any more."

"What do you mean?" demanded the lad's captor, advancing close to him.

"You know what I mean," said Hal quietly. "The Germans are the masters and the Austrians the slaves. You know that."

"You—you hound!" exclaimed the Austrian. "Take that!"

He struck Hal a heavy blow across the face with his open hand. But in doing so, he stepped close. Hal, his legs still tied, could not rise, but as the Austrian stooped over, the lad's right arm shot forth.

"There's my payment, with interest," said Hal as the Austrian staggered back.

The Austrian took three steps across the room and clapped a hand to his nose. When he removed it a tiny red stream trickled forth.

"That will teach you," said Hal calmly, "not to lay your hand on an American. You wouldn't dare raise a hand toward a German and you know it. You can take my word that before we get through with you, you'll grovel just as much before you look at an American."

The Austrian was terribly angry. He whipped a revolver from his pocket.

"I've a mind to kill you right here," he cried.

"But you won't," replied the lad quietly.

"I won't, eh? I'll——"

"Oh, keep quiet," said Hal wearily. "You're fooling no one but yourself. You wouldn't dare shoot me without orders from your master. Don't you think I know you are not the brains of this plot? Whoever heard of an Austrian giving orders? You probably have been instructed to take me before your master, that he may try to learn something from us. You——"

Hal became silent at the sound of footsteps without. A moment later a second man entered the room.

"Count," he said in a stern voice, "I believe I instructed you to have the prisoner brought before me five minutes ago. When I command, you must obey."

The count bowed, but said nothing.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Hal.

The count gazed at him, his eyes red with anger.

"You shall pay for this!" he exclaimed in a low voice.

Meantime, the other figure had left the room. What he was doing in Washington now that war with Germany had been declared, the lad had no means of knowing, but the tone of his voice—that of a man born to command—told them that he was a German.

The Austrian now unbound the lad's legs and motioned him to precede him through the door. He emphasized this with his revolver. There was nothing the lad could do but obey.

A moment later they were in another room. At a long table sat a dozen men, masked. Apparently it was a council table.

The man at the head of the table arose as Hal was led forward.

"Your name," he said crisply.

"Hal Paine, holding the commission of captain in the British army."

"Your rank and affiliation are apparent from your uniform and straps," sneered the speaker. "I am informed also that you have just arrived in the United States from the western front."

"You might have read it in the newspapers," was Hal's curt reply.

"But I didn't," declared the man, who was evidently the president of the council. "My information came through secret sources. Now, what I want from you is to learn the object of your visit. What is it?"

"You'll never find out from me. If your secret source of information is so good, why don't you find out through it?"

"Answer my question," said the president of the council, ignoring Hal's remark. "What is your business here?"

"It is none of your business."

"What!" exclaimed the German in a threatening manner.

"You heard me. I say it is none of your business."

"When you address me," said the questioner, "you will say, Sir."

Hal smiled.

"Oh, will I? Well, I'd have you know that I say 'sir' only to my equals, or superiors. You are not in that class."

Several of those around the table sprang to their feet, but the president waved them back.

"We will waive that point," he said firmly. "At present there are more important matters that need our attention."

There was that in his voice that convinced Hal he was not a man to be trifled with, still the boy did not quail.

"I am fairly well informed," continued the speaker, "as to what your mission here is, but I wish to make certain. The information you possess I am bound to have in one way or another, and you might just as well understand that I am not a man to be trifled with. If you do not answer my questions willingly, I shall take steps to make you answer them unwillingly. Do I make myself plain?"

"Perfectly," replied Hal.

"And are you now willing to answer?"

"I am willing to answer any question that I am at liberty to answer. I will not answer any question that will betray to the enemy the plans or purposes of my country."

"I suppose you mean England."

"You know very well that I do not. I am an American and joined the English army because I wanted to help overthrow just such men as you are —men who are holding the German people in slavery."

"Fine words," sneered the president, "but they mean nothing——"

"To you," interrupted Hal. "They mean much to me and my country, as you will eventually find out."

For a moment there was silence and then the president asked: "Am I right in believing that you and other British officers have been sent here to help train the young officers in the various camps?"

"Certainly you are right. The facts are known to every one."

"Good! Now then, tell me how many officers have been taken from the firing line for that purpose?"

"I am unable to answer."

"Do you mean you can't or that you won't?"

Hal shrugged his shoulders.

"Take it either way you choose," he said.

"We'll pass that for the moment," said the Ger-

man. "Is it also true that French officers are being sent to the United States for the same purpose?"

"Undoubtedly."

"In what numbers?"

Again Hal shrugged his shoulders.

"There is no answer to that question, either," was his response.

"We shall see," declared the German. "Count von Leipsicburger, the lash."

Hal heard the word "lash" and realized at once what it meant. He was too well acquainted with the German methods of frightfulness not to know; but not for an instant did he show any sense of fear.

With an evil smile the Austrian left the room, only to return in a few minutes with a long black-snake whip.

"The instrument you see there," said the inquisitor as he pointed to the whip, "is one that I have found useful on several occasions."

"I have no doubt of it," sneered Hal. "It is a fitting weapon for such as those here to use."

"And you shall feel it at once unless you immediately answer the questions I have asked."

Hal smiled scornfully.

"You have learned very little about the American people," he said calmly, "if you think one can be forced to betray his country by any such means."

The German wasted no time in words.

"Strip him!" he commanded.

Two men sprang forward and obeyed the order.

"Once more," said the Hun, "will you answer my questions?"

"Never," replied Hal.

"Five lashes, Count," was the next command.

The count raised the lash, but it did not descend. With a wrench Hal loosed himself from the men who held him and dove between von Leipsicburger's feet. The man pitched forward, while Hal, scrambling to his feet, darted for a door.

All others in the room, including the president of the council, started in wild pursuit.

Bursting through the door, Hal found himself in darkness, but across the room he caught a glimmer of sunlight, toward which he plunged, thinking to himself as he ran that he had no idea that it was day.

Reaching the spot where the sun shone through, it proved to be a wooden shutter, barred on the inside.

Hal grabbed the bar and yanked it from its fastening, allowing the shutter to swing open.

By this light his pursuers were able to see him distinctly, and they uttered a shout of triumph.

Clinging to the bar, Hal turned and faced them.

Count von Leipsicburger raised a revolver, but the president knocked it from his hand.

"Fool!" he exclaimed. "Would you bring the police? Seize him, men."

The two who had allowed him to escape from their grasp sprang forward to obey, when the window was suddenly darkened by the form of a big, burly policeman, who stuck his head inside.

"Hold on there!" he cried, seeing half a dozen about to attack one slight youth. "What's the trouble?"

"Don't pay any attention to him," shouted the German. "Seize the boy."

"Oh, seize the boy, is it?" exclaimed the policeman. "Well, I guess not," and he flashed his automatic in their faces. "You stay right where you are till the patrol arrives."

Covering the crowd, he blew his whistle vigorously and in a couple of minutes was joined by another bluecoat.

"Call the wagon, Jerry," he said, "and tell 'em it's a riot."

Ten minutes later the patrol wagon dashed up and Hal and his former captors were soon whirled away to the central station.

"Sure, we've been looking for you ever since last night," was the greeting of the desk sergeant as Hal gave his name. "Go to that 'phone yonder and call up Colonel Waldron at Fort Myer. The number is West 2000. We'll hold these others for the Department of Justice."

CHAPTER XV

FORT NIAGARA

Fort Niagara!

It is a name that will live long in the memories of both Hal and Chester. There, for the next month or two, they were to spend their days and nights, working harder than they had had occasion to do in their three years with the armies of Europe. There they were to render such valuable service as to win for themselves special mention from the commander and, as a result of this, permission to accompany the first contingent of American regulars sent to reinforce the allied armies in France.

To Fort Niagara flocked thousands of young men who sought commissions in the United States army. For the most part, these young men came from the great states of New York and Pennsylvania—in fact, the representation from the Keystone State was particularly large.

The patriotism of these young men was clearly proven by the fact that they gave up their businesses and positions in answer to Uncle Sam's appeal for officers to lead his forces into battle. The shortage of officers in the army was a thing that had given military officials keen anxiety, and these training camps, which were opened in various parts of the

country was the solution hit upon to relieve the shortage.

The men poured into the camps by the hundreds.

Because of its locality, Fort Niagara was one of the largest training grounds. Here, for three months, men from New York and Pennsylvania, with a few from other states, would drill, study the art of warfare under experienced officers and prepare themselves for the battlefields of Europe.

Fort Niagara, as the training camp was called, was located close to historic Niagara Falls and close to the city of Buffalo. The men who underwent training there received no pay and even furnished their own outfits.

Hal and Chester arrived at the camp Tuesday morning and reported immediately to Lieutenant Colonel West, commandant. They were immediately assigned to quarters. It was expected that the bulk of the applicants would be in camp by Tuesday night. The first drill would not be held until Thursday, however, as the intervening day was to be given over to getting the men into khaki and properly quartered.

Mess tents had been set in time for the early arrivals, and the men were assigned to quarters as fast as they arrived. Discipline in the camp was to be as strict as though it were actually an army post. There would be no trifling. Such men as were un-

able to pass the physical and mental examinations would be sent home straightway. At these training camps Uncle Sam had time for none but men sound both mentally and physically.

Hal and Chester made themselves comfortable in their new quarters. Thanks to their experience on the firing line, they were familiar with a number of little tricks that were not known to the uninitiated that would go far toward relieving the hardships of camp life. They lent a helping hand wherever it was possible, and many a raw recruit had one of the lads to thank for the fact that his quarters were made more comfortable and habitable.

Next to Lieutenant Colonel West were Majors Putnam and Jefferson. Then came perhaps a dozen captains and several dozen first lieutenants, among whom were Hal and Chester. Because of the fact that the number of applicants was so large, it was announced that each lieutenant would be put in command of a squad of perhaps twenty-five men—in many cases more, in some less. These would be weeded out as men failed to come up to specifications.

Hal and Chester had left Washington early Monday night. True to their words, Mrs. Paine and Mrs. Crawford had reached the capital Friday evening, and the two boys spent the remainder of their hours of liberty in their mothers' company. Chester's father had been unable to get away upon such

short notice, but sent word that he would come east to see them later.

Chester's Uncle John, who had been through some adventures with the two lads when they fought with the armies of Italy, also sent word that he would drop in on them before many days had passed. He asked that the lads promise, however, that they would keep an "old timer like myself out of mischief."

In Chester's words, Uncle John was what is properly called "a good sport."

Following their adventures in Washington, the boys, according to instructions, had reported to the Washington chief of police the morning after their thrilling experiences, and had seen the plotters turned over to the government authorities. An effort would be made to have them convicted of espionage—and in times of war the punishment of a spy is death.

Mrs. Paine and Mrs. Crawford left Washington at the same time as the two lads. They rode together as far as Harrisburg, from where the lads' way led to Buffalo and that of their mothers to Pittsburgh and Chicago. Both mothers had promised to return east within a few weeks and to bring Mr. Crawford and Uncle John with them.

On Wednesday night the men in camp at Fort Niagara retired early to rest. Three months of intensive training was to start on the morrow and there wasn't a man who slept beneath the countless

numbers of canvas tops who didn't want to be in perfect trim when he arose.

It was still almost dark when the clear notes of the reveille, sounded by a bugler, shattered the stillness of the camp.

This was nothing new to Hal and Chester and they were dressed and out of their quarters in a few moments. From other tents sleepy heads appeared and gradually the camp came to life. The squads to be drilled by Hal and Chester were camped closely together, and for this reason the lads had been able to occupy the same tent.

Now each boy moved from tent to tent good naturedly arousing the sleepy men—some of whom, ordinarily, would not have arisen for several hours yet.

As each man came forth, the lads set him to work arousing other sleepers, and at length all of the men were standing shivering in the cool morning air.

There was not the slightest semblance of military formation in the camp that morning. Hal eyed his men carefully. Down near the end of the imperfect line he saw a man who stood straighter than the rest—a man apparently, too, advanced in years.

"Wonder how a man of his age chanced to apply here?" he said to himself. "He looks as though he might have had military training."

Hal passed down the line and stopped before him

"What is your name?" the lad asked.

"McKenzie, sir," came the reply, and the man saluted. "Tom McKenzie, sir."

"You have seen service?" asked Hal.

"Yes, sir. Seven years in the Canadian army, sir."

"Officer?"

"Sergeant, sir."

"Why aren't you with the Canadian army now?"

"Well," said McKenzie, taking off his cap and scratching his head, "I don't know, to tell the truth. I had left the service when England declared war. I tried to get back in, but I couldn't pass. When I heard that the United States had declared war and was going to open officers' training camps, I thought I'd try here, sir. I've seen active service, sir—fought through the Boer war in South Africa. Thought maybe I could make myself useful."

"You know your age is somewhat against you?" questioned Hal.

"Sure; but if I can help any with these recruits, that will be something, sir."

"Very well," said Hal. "I'll appoint you my top sergeant. See if you can bring order out of confusion here; and mind, no rough handling goes while I'm in command. Besides, you must remember that these men are absolutely ignorant of mili-

tary tactics—and even of what discipline means. We'll have to come to that gradually."

"Very well, sir. Thank you, sir. May I ask you a question, sir?"

"Certainly," said Hal. "What is it?"

"You're an American, sir, but I'll take my oath you have seen active service, in spite of your lack of years. Am I right?"

"You are, sergeant," said Hal. "My chum and I have put in three years with the French and British across the sea."

"I knew it!" cried McKenzie. "I didn't think I could be mistaken."

"Then get these men in line, sergeant. The mess call will blow directly and we want to be ready."

Sergeant McKenzie saluted and strode down the line. As he passed in front of the men, he gently pushed a man back or pulled him forward, at the same time explaining the reason for his actions; and a few moments later the line presented an appearance of straightness.

In his own part of the field—next Hal—Chester was doing the work with more difficulty. He glanced to where Hal's men stood, and, seeing the straightness of the line there, urged his men to emulate the others. He didn't know that Hal had found such an able assistant as Sergeant McKenzie, and he muttered to himself:

"By Jove! Hal's doing better than I am, or else

he has more intelligent material to work with."

At that moment the bugle at headquarters sounded the call to mess.

The men moved toward the "grub tents."

CHAPTER XVI

HAL DISCOVERS A MYSTERY

After mess came drill. All day long, with only a brief interval for dinner, the men were taught the rudiments of army evolutions. They were taught the simplest formations first, how to wheel, advance and retreat. Some time was also given to study.

Because these candidates were not men for the ranks, they were spared some of the more strenuous work, but there was work enough to make them ready for supper at 6 o'clock and their cots soon afterwards.

In Sergeant McKenzie Hal found an able assistant, and at the end of the day it was found that Hal's squad had made more progress than any in the camp. Hal gave full credit to Sergeant McKenzie.

"Hal," said Chester, as he came into their quarters that evening, "you've got the best bunch of men in camp—more intelligent and quicker to learn, I mean."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that," said Hal.

"Guess you think because you have made such progress you are the most proficient officer, eh?" said Chester sarcastically.

"Oh, no, I don't think that. I've just been a bit fortunate; that's all."

"How?" demanded Chester.

"Well," said Hal, "I've found a man in my company who put in seven years with the British army —fought through the Boer war and has seen other service."

"By Jove!" said Chester. "You always were a lucky fellow. No wonder your men show up so well. I'll trade you ten of my men for him."

"Not much!" said Hal. "Besides, we wouldn't be allowed to trade anyhow."

"Oh, I know it," said Chester. "I was just talking, that's all. Now, I picked out a man and labelled him first sergeant, and he's all swelled up. Thinks he'll go across as a brigadier general or something. Besides, he doesn't know any too much. He's served in the National Guard. He's from Harrisburg, I believe. Went to the border with his unit, and while he didn't get into Mexico with Pershing, he's absolutely certain he knows more about drilling men than I do."

"Well, reduce him to the ranks," said Hal with a laugh. "He's not fit to drill men."

"Well, I'll drill him a bit," said Chester. "His name is Grimm, and I can't say that I even like the name a whole lot."

"Looks like you had made a bad choice," said Hal.

"So it does. But tell me something about this sergeant of yours."

"I don't know anything about him except what I've told you. He seems to be about forty years old, though he may not be. I'll have him in and introduce him to you."

"Do," said Chester.

Hal summoned Sergeant McKenzie and that worthy presented himself shortly.

"Sergeant," said Hal, "I want you to meet my chum—the one I said fought with me in Europe. Lieutenant Crawford, sergeant. Chester, this is Sergeant McKenzie."

"I'm very glad to know you, sir," said the sergeant respectfully, and saluted and stood still.

Hal and Chester sat on the edges of their cots.

"Have a seat, sergeant," said Hal, pointing to a camp stool. "I know it's not customary for an officer to invite his subordinate to sit down, but you're old in the service and are not the man to take advantage of friendship. Sit down."

Sergeant McKenzie sat down.

"Sergeant," said Chester, "we have been talking about you. You know, of course, that it's highly improbable you will win a commission here. Your age is against you."

"I am afraid so, sir," was the reply.

"But I'll tell you," said Hal. "If you don't, I'll try to have you accepted in the regular army.

Surely, they have need of men such as you. Now, I have friends in the British army. I have no doubt a letter would gain your appointment."

Sergeant McKenzie half rose from his seat; then sat back quickly.

"If it's all the same to you, sir," he said, "I would prefer to serve with the American forces. Besides, I'm not as old a man as I look. You would be surprised if you knew my age."

"The deuce!" said Hal, as he noticed the sergeant's confusion when he mentioned trying to have him appointed in the British army. "There is something queer here. I wonder what it is?"

But the lad decided he would not pry into the other's private matters.

"Sergeant," said Chester, "we are much interested in you. Can you tell us a little of your experiences in the Boer war?"

"Why, sir," said Sergeant McKenzie, "there isn't much to tell. My regiment was in Ottawa when the war broke out. Six months later I was in the Transvaal."

"Were you at Pretoria?" asked Chester.

"Yes, sir."

"And Ladysmith?"

"I was in the army that marched to the relief of Ladysmith, sir."

"You've seen considerable service then," said Chester. "But I'll tell you something. I have an

idea that the present war is as unlike the Boer trouble as was the battle of Bunker Hill unlike Gettysburg. You cannot realize the methods of fighting in Europe today if you have not seen them with your own eyes."

"I have no doubt of that, sir. And still the principle is the same. The manual of arms is practically unchanged, and that is what I am here to help teach these young fellows, sir."

"Good for you, sergeant," said Hal. "I have no doubt that we can both learn a whole lot from you."

"And I can learn much more from you, sir," said the sergeant. "When young men like you have won the distinction you have, you can't tell an old soldier that there isn't some reason for it. Were you lieutenants in the British army, sir?"

"Captains when we left, sergeant," said Chester with a laugh.

"Then you have sacrificed rank to help your own countrymen," said Sergeant McKenzie. "That is to your credit, sirs."

"Thanks, sergeant," said Hal. "I'll tell you something. You missed one of the grandest sights in the world—one of the most spectacular and heroic actions of the world's history—by not being with your own Canadian troops at the battle of Vimy Ridge."

"Were you there, sir?" asked McKenzie in some surprise.

"We were," returned Chester, "and I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

"It must have been a gallant struggle," said Sergeant McKenzie. "I have heard that the Canadians carried the ridge in the first assault."

"They did indeed," said Chester enthusiastically, "and in less than an hour."

"So? I used to have an old friend with the Canadians," said the sergeant. "He is probably over there now. Perhaps you have heard of him. Colonel Adamson is his name."

"To be sure we know him," said Hal. "He led a division against Vimy Ridge. He was in the very heart of the conflict. He held out at La Folie farm against heavy odds and that when it seemed that he must be annihilated. Chester and I were in the force that went to his relief."

"And did he come through safely?" demanded Sergeant McKenzie.

"He did, sergeant," replied Hal. "You have reason to be proud of your old friend."

Sergeant McKenzie's two hands gripped the side of his stool so hard that his knuckles showed white. A peculiar expression flitted across his face but was gone in an instant.

"I should, sir," he replied in answer to Hal's last remark.

But Hal had not missed the expression on the sergeant's face. Neither had Chester, and both lads

had noticed the fierceness with which the man gripped his stool.

The three talked a few moments later; then the sergeant got to his feet.

"If you have no orders for me, sir," he said to Hal, "I shall return to my quarters. I'm not as young as I used to be," he added with a laugh that to the lads sounded forced, "so I usually turn in as early as possible."

"Of course, sergeant," said Hal. "Turn in any time you please. We should not have kept you talking so long."

Sergeant McKenzie saluted and left the tent.

"By Jove!" said Hal, when he felt certain the sergeant was out of hearing, "there is something decidedly mysterious about my friend the sergeant."

"You can bet on that," Chester agreed. "He has no love for Colonel Adamson; that's certain. Did you see the way he looked when the colonel's name was mentioned?"

"I did," replied Hal. "Wonder what's at the bottom of it? McKenzie is a good man. I have watched his work. If I can help him get in the army I will. But if he has a grudge against Colonel Adamson, I wouldn't like to be Colonel Adamson."

"Nor I," said Chester. "But come, let's turn in."

Five minutes later the lads were fast asleep.

CHAPTER XVII

GRIMM REBELS

CHESTER eyed his squad of men approvingly. A fine lot they were, and under the lad's guiding hand they were beginning to show some semblance of military men. It was a week after the drills had started at camp. The boy was somewhat proud of his work.

Grimm, dislike of whom Chester had expressed to Hal after the first day, was still Chester's chief assistant. The lad had deemed it unwise to make a change. He knew that Grimm would be disgruntled if reduced and he feared that dissatisfaction would spread among the others. Grimm had an overbearing way with the men, but Chester had held him in restraint.

It was perfectly plain to Chester that Grimm had little use for his (Chester's) methods. The man was perfectly certain in his own mind that he could accomplish better results than could Chester. The boy said nothing to Grimm which would tell the man he knew what was in his mind, but he was determined to put a curb on him at the first sign of insubordination.

Such signs were longer making their appearance than Chester thought they would be. The lad had

expected an outbreak almost any day. Now, at the end of a week of training, the lad figured that Grimm would keep his thoughts to himself.

In this Chester was wrong.

On this particular day Grimm seemed to be in a particularly bad temper. Things went wrong from the start. The line of men, for some reason or other, seemed unable to remain straight. Chester ordered all drilling stopped and commanded Grimm to put the men straight.

"They don't seem to be working very smoothly," he said to Grimm.

There was one man particularly who it appeared could not keep in line with his fellows. Grimm approached him.

"What's the matter with you, Moore?" he demanded. "You seem to be all feet. Dress right there and do it *pronto*"—a word Grimm had learned on the Mexican border, meaning quick, and of which he was very proud.

Moore flushed and obeyed the command.

"Don't let me speak to you fellows again," continued Grimm. "When I give a command I want it obeyed."

A murmur of disapproval ran down the line.

"Shut up!" commanded Grimm.

Chester took three quick strides forward and laid a hand on Grimm's shoulder.

"That's enough of that kind of talk, Mr. Grimm,"

he said quietly. "Remember you are addressing men —not cattle or swine. Give your orders in a gentlemanly way and you will get better results."

Every man in the line heard these words and every man was filled with a desire to shout his approval; but all remained silent.

Grimm's face turned a dull red. It was the first time Chester had reprimanded him in front of the others.

"You," he said, turning to Chester, "know nothing of training men. If you'd let me alone I'd soon have this bunch in shape."

"If I let you alone," said Chester calmly, "one of these men soon would take it upon himself to teach you manners, sir."

Grimm, who was at least six years older than Chester, took a step toward the lad.

"You can't talk to me like that," he said.

"If you were half as important as you think you are I wouldn't have to," returned Chester. "You exceed your authority, sir, and you exaggerate your importance altogether."

"I tell you——"

"Silence," said Chester. "Not another word in front of the men. If you address me again without being spoken to, I shall place you under arrest. Go on with the drill."

Chester moved back and watched Grimm maneuver the men.

The men seemed to work with machine-like precision—so far as they knew how—following Chester's reprimand of Grimm. There was not the least doubt that they were hugely pleased and Grimm realized it. Each man smiled to himself occasionally, and Grimm, who caught these expressions from time to time, became angrier with each passing moment.

At last came the call to dinner. Grimm dismissed the men and they scampered off. Grimm approached Chester, who stood near, smiling.

"I must ask you," he said, "that, if at any future time you have anything to say to me, not to say it in front of the men. It is bad for discipline."

"I agree with you that it would be, if your discipline of the men was conducted properly," said Chester. "And in the future, I shall make it my business to see that you do not exceed all bounds."

Chester turned on his heel and would have departed, but Grimm laid a hand on his arm.

"Not so fast," he said.

Chester glanced around. There was no one in sight, as Chester knew was the case. Grimm would not have taken such freedom had there been witnesses.

"Take your hand off my arm," said Chester quietly.

"When I get ready," said Grimm. "I want to tell you that I am getting tired of your ways."

"I'm already tired of yours," said Chester.

"Well, now that we are alone," said Grimm, "I shall teach you a lesson."

"Look here, Grimm," said Chester. "Don't be a fool. Remember, I'm your superior and can have you sent to the guardhouse or expelled from the camp."

"By George! It will be worth expulsion to take a good lick at you," declared Grimm.

"That's what will happen if you don't remove your hand this moment," declared Chester. "I give you my word on that."

"Well, I'll remove my hand," said Grimm, "but I'm going to plant my fist right in your face—like this."

He swung quickly. But Chester had been ready for him. He knew by the expression in the man's eyes that he was about to strike. He stepped quickly to one side and avoided the blow.

Grimm stepped back and squared off.

"Grimm," said Chester quietly, "I'll give you one more chance. Go to your dinner now and I'll say nothing about this. I don't want to be hard on you."

Grimm sneered at him.

"Afraid, are you?" he said. "I thought so. A nice officer you are."

He sprang forward and aimed another heavy blow at Chester.

"Oh, well," said Chester to himself, "if you will have it you will. I guess we don't want men like you in the army, anyhow."

He sidestepped Grimm's blow; then sprang in close. Grimm tried to recover himself but it was too late. Chester placed one arm around his neck and putting out his left foot tripped Grimm neatly and the man went to the ground sprawling on his back.

"You are under arrest, sir," said Chester quietly, standing over him. "Go to your quarters at once."

"Not much," said Grimm, springing to his feet. "I'll get even with you."

He advanced to resume the battle.

"Grimm," said Chester, "I've changed my mind. You may make a good soldier after all. Therefore, I won't report you, but I'm going to give you the worst thrashing you have had in your life."

Chester advanced so confidently that Grimm gave ground involuntarily.

But Chester had made up his mind as to the course of action to be pursued, and once the lad's mind was made up, it took more than a man like Grimm to change it.

Chester realized that the fight must be brief, for he did not wish others of his men to see him thus embroiled. Perceiving that the lad meant business, Grimm put himself in an attitude of defense.

He sidestepped Chester's first blow and struck

the lad heavily across the face with his right. But Chester did not intend to stand off and spar, which is the reason Grimm was permitted to land the first blow.

Stepping inside the other's guard, Chester put his right to the pit of Grimm's stomach, and as the latter's head came forward, straightened him up again with a heavy left to the point of the chin.

Grimm toppled to the ground. The fight was over, so far as he was concerned.

Chester stood by quietly until Grimm opened his eyes. Then the lad said.

"Get up."

Grimm obeyed.

"Now," said Chester, "go to your quarters and clean yourself up. You will not have time to eat dinner, but that will be your punishment. Report to me when you are ready to resume your duties, and be sure that you report within half an hour."

Grimm saluted.

"Yes, sir," he said quietly.

Chester turned on his heel to conceal a smile, and strode away.

"Guess friend Grimm has learned a good lesson," he told himself.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WEEKS PASS

THE days now lengthened swiftly into weeks and the weeks into months. Soon the boys realized that there was but another month of work ahead of them at Fort Niagara.

From time to time they heard rumors that American troops were about to be sent to France, but these rumors were without verification.

"Wish we could go across with the first batch," said Hal to Chester one night.

"So do I," agreed Chester.

"Guess we won't, though," said Hal. "I don't know whether troops have been sent yet—I doubt it, in spite of rumors we have heard—but I feel sure some troops will be sent abroad before we finish our work at this training camp."

"Well, we shall have to take what comes," said Chester.

Gradually the weeding-out process at Fort Niagara had simmered down to where the men now left were practically assured of commissions. Grimm, thanks to Chester's failure to report his insubordination, was still at Fort Niagara and had developed into a great admirer of the lad. Sergeant McKenzie had been released because of his

age. Hal had announced his intention of using what influence he had to have the sergeant accepted in the regular army, and had given him a letter to the British minister in Washington, requesting that he use his influence with the American military authorities to have Sergeant McKenzie taken into the army. The lad had not heard from the sergeant since he left the camp.

Both boys had had letters from their mothers. Uncle John and Chester's father also had written frequently, but none had visited the camp. Of Stubbs they had heard nothing in spite of the fact that they had followed the little man's injunction and sent him their address.

On an evening of the first week in the third month at camp, Hal and Chester were summoned to the quarters of Colonel West, commandant.

"Wonder what's up?" said Chester, as they made their way to headquarters.

"Too deep for me," said Hal. "Guess we'll know soon enough, though."

The colonel received them at once and motioned them to seats.

"Lieutenant Paine," he said, "you have done well here. And so have you, Lieutenant Crawford. I wish to say that the men who have received instructions from you are among the best, if they are not the best, trained in camp. I have mentioned this in my report to Washington."

"Thank you, sir," replied both lads. "We are glad you are pleased, sir."

"My report," said the colonel, "was made last week. As a result of your valuable services here, General Scott, chief of staff, has mentioned you both in a communication I have just received."

The boys held their breath. They wondered what was coming next.

"It appears," continued the commandant, "that you have seen three years of active service in Europe. Why haven't you told me of this?"

"Well," said Hal, "we weren't sent here to relate what we have done, but to lend a hand in training the men here."

"Right you are," agreed the commandant. "It pleases me to see that you are not of the sort given to bragging and boasting. But I suppose you are interested to know what General Scott writes of you?"

Both lads smiled.

"Well, naturally, sir," replied Chester.

Colonel West returned their smiles.

"General Scott writes," he said, "that you are to report day after tomorrow to him in person."

Hal and Chester were surprised.

"Have you any idea what he may desire of us?" asked Hal.

"Well," said the colonel, "I would be greatly surprised if you two boys were not the most fortu-

nate at Camp Niagara. I have an idea that your recall to Washington means that you will soon be back in France."

"You mean with the first expeditionary force, sir?" cried Chester, unable to conceal his exultation.

"I do," returned Colonel West.

Hal suppressed his joy with an effort.

"That will indeed be good news, sir," he said quietly. "Have you any idea when the troops are to sail?"

"Only the President, his advisors and the chief of staff are aware of what arrangements have been made," replied Colonel West. "Besides, if I did know, I would not be at liberty to tell you, or anyone else. You both realize the necessity of secrecy. As you know, the waters in proximity to Great Britain and France are infested with German submarines, as are the steamer channels across. The departure of American transports must be made with utmost secrecy. It would be a catastrophe indeed if one of our troop ships were to be sunk."

"I understand, sir," said Chester. "Then it will be well for us not to mention that we expect soon to be in France."

"Exactly. It is too bad that the time is so short, or you would be able to run home for a day or two. I would suggest that if you wish to see your parents, you wire them immediately to meet you in Washington."

"Thank you, sir. We shall take your advice," said Hal.

"That is all, then," said Colonel West. "You are relieved of duty here. You may leave the camp in the morning. I don't suppose I shall see you again. So here's good luck to you both."

The commandant extended his hand and both boys shook it heartily. Then they made their way toward their quarters.

Upon leaving their tent the lads had extinguished the light, so that they were greatly surprised, as they came within sight of it, to see a light streaming through the entrance.

"Hello," said Chester. "We have visitors. I wonder who is making free with our quarters during our absence?"

"By Jove!" said Hal. "I don't know who it is, but somebody has unqualified nerve. Maybe it's a thief. If it is we'll catch him red-handed. Hurry up, Chester."

Chester needed no urging and the lads advanced cautiously toward the tent. At the entrance Hal stopped and peered in. Then he gave an exclamation of surprise.

"Well, what do you think of that?" he cried.

Chester pushed his chum away and also peered in.

"By Jove!" he muttered.

For there, seated on a stool in the center of the tent, drowsing, sat Anthony Stubbs.

Hal laid a finger to his lips and the boys moved quietly into the tent. Without arousing Stubbs, Hal extinguished the light. Then he cried out:

"Burglar, Chester! Grab him!"

Instantly both lads fell upon the unsuspecting Stubbs, who, thus rudely awakened, began to cry out denials of evil intent.

"Hold on! Hold on, now!" he cried. "I'm no burglar. "Hal! Chester! Don't you know me?"

The lads paid no attention to these cries, but continued to handle Stubbs somewhat roughly in the darkness.

"I tell you I'm no thief," cried Stubbs again, raising his voice. "I'm you're old friend, Stubbs."

"Friend!" echoed Chester. "We have no friends who fall upon us when we are asleep and try to do away with us. There, I've got him, Hal. What shall we do with him?"

"Tie him up and leave him here till morning," said Hal. "We can't be deprived of our sleep."

"Strike a light and look at me first," pleaded Stubbs. "I tell you I am a friend."

"Well, that might be well," said Hal, apparently considering. "We'll do it."

Chester made a light and both boys looked at their prisoner.

"Well, what do you think of that!" exclaimed Hal in well simulated surprise. "If it isn't Stubbs!"

"Of course it's me," said the war correspondent

angrily, "and I must say it is a nice reception I received."

"But to come upon us in the dark——" began Chester.

"I didn't," Stubbs protested. "An officer showed me your quarters. You weren't here, so I sat down to wait. The next thing I knew it was dark and I was being roughly treated. I cried out my name, but you didn't take any heed."

"You cried out?" said Chester.

He looked at Hal significantly. Stubbs caught the look.

"I tell you I did cry out," he said. "It's my belief you knew all the time who I was."

"Now, Stubbs," said Hal, protestingly. "You know——"

"I know more than you think I do," declared Stubbs, still angry. "It was a rotten trick, if you ask me. I don't think I shall stay here longer."

He moved toward the door.

"Hold on, Stubbs," said Hal in alarm. "Can't you take a joke?"

"That was no joke," said Stubbs. "It was an outrage."

"Well, we beg your forgiveness," said Chester quietly.

"In that event, all right," said the little man, much mollified. "I'll stay, and we'll have a good talk."

CHAPTER XIX

OLD FRIENDS MEET

"You will report tomorrow morning to Colonel Beauregard at Norfolk."

This was the command given Hal and Chester by General Hugh Scott, chief of staff to the President.

In company with Mr. Stubbs, who, it appeared, had gone to Fort Niagara merely to see them, the two lads had returned to Washington and had reported, according to instructions, the morning after their arrival, to General Scott.

"Colonel Beauregard," said General Scott, "will command the Twenty-first Cavalry under General Pershing. Further orders you will take from him. I may say, however, that you will find yourselves in France before many days."

"Thank you, sir," said Chester.

The lads saluted the general and left his presence. But as they went out the door the general called after them.

"One moment," he said, "I forgot to tell you that you will find Colonel Beauregard's command in Baltimore."

Again the lads saluted and this time left the building without being recalled.

"That means," said Hal, referring to the general's last words, "that we shall have to turn out early in the morning."

"Either that, or go over to Baltimore tonight," Chester agreed.

"We won't do that," said Hal, "because our mothers and your father and Uncle John are due here today. We want to see them before we leave if it is possible."

"What time did the telegram say they would reach here?"

"Ten-thirty this morning."

Chester looked at his watch.

"Well, it's nine-thirty now," he said. "We've just time to go to the hotel, pick up Stubbs, and get to the station. It will be nice to meet them when they get off the train, rather than waiting for them to reach the hotel."

"I agree with you," said Hal. "But we must make reservations for them at the hotel."

These tasks were but the matter of a few moments, and a short time later Hal, Chester and Stubbs were speeding toward the station in a large automobile which they had hired so that all might ride back to the hotel together.

The train was half an hour late, and the three strolled restlessly up and down the station.

"I'll be glad to see your Uncle John again," said

Stubbs to Chester. "He's a brave man—a man after my own heart."

"That so, Stubbs?" returned the lad. "I didn't know you laid claim to being such a terrible fighter."

"Maybe not," said Stubbs, "but I can recall several occasions where my efforts, poor though they were, proved of no little value to you."

"Right you are, Stubbs," agreed Hal warmly. "We have much to thank you for."

"Oh, I'm not looking for thanks," declared Stubbs, "but I don't like to be picked on all the time."

"And I don't like to see you picked on," declared Hal. "Chester, you shouldn't do it."

"You're a nice one to talk, aren't you?" demanded Chester. "I don't plague our friend Stubbs half as much as you do. Do I, Stubbs?"

"Well, I—I——" began Stubbs.

"I'll leave it to you, Stubbs," said Hal, "which one of us bothers you the most?"

"Rats with such an argument," said the little man, suddenly exasperated. "One is as bad as the other."

Both boys laughed.

"Here comes the train," said Chester suddenly. "By Jove! I hope they are on it. I wouldn't want to be disappointed."

"I guess you won't be," said Hal positively.

"They said they would be here at this hour and it would take a whole lot to keep them away."

Hal was right; and five minutes later the lads were clasped in their mothers' arms. Chester shook hands warmly with his father, as did Hal. Then they gave their attention to Uncle John, upon whom each lad bestowed quite a sizable hug.

"By George! I'm glad to see you boys again," declared Uncle John, "even if you did desert me over in Italy. I've a crow to pick with both of you for that." Uncle John gazed around. His eyes fell upon Stubbs. "Hello!" he exclaimed. "Surely I have seen this man before."

"Name of Stubbs," said the war correspondent advancing with a grin on his face and extended hand.

Uncle John grasped the hand heartily.

"So it is!" he exclaimed. "I was sure I knew you. Well, well! To think that we should all get together here after all these long months. It seems like a miracle. When I saw the last of you three, I was absolutely certain that I would never set eyes on a single one of you again. Yet here we are."

Uncle John became silent and was lost in reverie.

"Don't monopolize our friend Stubbs, Uncle John," said Chester approaching. "I want to introduce him around."

"That shall be my pleasure," declared Uncle John.

He presented Stubbs in turn to Mrs. Crawford and Mrs. Paine and then to Mr. Crawford.

"Here is the man," he said, in making the introductions, "who has done so much to bring Hal and Chester safely back."

Mr. and Mrs. Crawford and Mrs. Paine grasped Stubbs' hand warmly.

"Well, what do you think of that?" exclaimed Hal in an aside to Chester. "Stubbs has stepped in again and grabbed all the glory."

"Oh, well," said Chester, "I guess he deserves it after all. He has done a lot for us. No mistake about that."

The boys now led the way toward the waiting automobile. An hour later they were all installed in a comfortable suite in the Shoreham. It was a happy family party. Even Stubbs was made to feel that he belonged. For more than two hours Stubbs and the boys were kept busy reciting their adventures abroad.

"And when do you sail?" asked Mr. Crawford of his son.

"I don't know exactly, Dad," was the reply, "but we are ordered to report to Colonel Beauregard of the Twenty-first cavalry in Baltimore in the morning. So, you see, we won't be with you long."

"Do you know from what port you will sail?"

"No, sir, and if we did we would not be permitted to tell even our family. Those orders have

been issued by the war department. All sailings will be kept absolutely secret."

"Which is perfectly proper," declared Mr. Crawford. "I am glad to see the government is taking all proper precautions. It means that there is that much more in favor of our boys reaching the other side safely in spite of the German submarines."

"Oh, we'll get across; never fear," returned Chester with a laugh.

"I am sure I hope so," returned Mr. Crawford gravely; "and I as earnestly hope that you will come safely back to us."

"We'll do that, too, Dad," replied Chester confidently. "It will take more than the German Kaiser and his men to keep us in Europe after the war is over."

"I am afraid," said Mr. Crawford, "that it will be years yet before the struggle comes to an end. Of course, Germany will be crushed eventually—she must be—but she is far from beaten yet. Her reserve strength no man knows, but it must be great. I fear she has drawn but lightly upon it yet."

"But they are being pushed back on all fronts, Dad," Chester protested.

"But not as rapidly as they should be, to my mind," declared Mr. Crawford. "I look for Germany to deliver a sudden crushing blow in Italy before long. It appears to me, and I have studied the situation closely, that the Allies are not giving

serious enough consideration to such a possibility."

"But the Italians are holding their own—even advancing into Austrian territory," declared Chester.

"True; but one heavy blow and they would lose almost in a moment what they have gained in months. I believe it is there the Kaiser will strike next."

"If he does," said Chester, "you may be sure that we shall be ready for him."

"Then there is the Russian situation, too," went on Mr. Crawford. "We don't really know what is going on over there. Russia is likely to sue for a separate peace at any time."

"Don't you believe it!" exclaimed Chester. "We spent some time with the Russian army, and in spite of the rumors we hear, I am confident that Russia will fight on to the end."

"I hope so," declared Mr. Crawford. "But come, I am monopolizing you, and your mother and the others will want to talk to you. You will not be with us much longer."

The conversation again became general.

CHAPTER XX

A NAVAL ENCOUNTER

THREE days later the first American troops sent to join their British and French allies on the firing line in France steamed from an American port aboard four big transports.

This first contingent consisted of approximately 25,000 men. It is not permitted that the name of the port from which they sailed be revealed, for the war is still in progress and other troops are being sent and will continue to be sent from this same port until the struggle for liberty and democracy of the world shall have ceased. Therefore, boys who are interested in the fortunes of Hal and Chester and in the success of the American cause will not expect military secrets to be divulged.

The transports sailed from the shores of America under heavy convoy. A fleet of fast torpedo boat destroyers completely surrounded the troop ships. It would be the duty of these small vessels to keep a sharp lookout for German submarines and to make sure that no torpedo from one of these under-sea terrors reached an American troop ship.

For the troops themselves there was nothing to do but go through their regular daily drills aboard

ship and to make themselves as comfortable as possible during the voyage.

Hal and Chester found themselves aboard the same vessel which carried Major-General John Pershing and his staff.

There was one thing that worried the boys.

"General Pershing has only the rank of major-general," said Hal. "He will not rank with General Haig and General Petain. Surely, something will have to be done about that."

"I suppose the President will make him a full-fledged general, in that event," said Chester.

"I guess that will be the solution," Hal agreed, "although such action will have to be approved by Congress."

"I can't imagine that Congress will balk there."

"Nor I. But if General Pershing is given the rank of general, he will be the first to hold that rank since General Sheridan."

"By Jove! That's so. I hadn't thought of that."

This was indeed the plan that President Wilson followed to give General Pershing equal rank with the leaders of the British and French forces at the front.

There was a surprise in store for Hal and Chester.

Since they had joined Colonel Beauregard's command they had been kept close to their superior. The troops had been sent to the port from which

they were to embark before Colonel Beauregard himself left Baltimore. For this reason, Hal and Chester had not had opportunity to look over the command as yet.

But now, as leisure was their chief occupation, the lads began to get acquainted with their brother officers.

Early one evening, as the lads stood aft watching the setting of the sun, Hal, turning, saw a familiar figure leaning close to the rail not far away. Hal glanced at him sharply and then gave an exclamation of surprise. Chester gazed toward the man at Hal's exclamation.

"By George!" said Chester. "It's your old friend Sergeant McKenzie."

"It certainly is," Hal agreed. "I'll have a word with him."

He approached and touched the sergeant on the shoulder.

"How are you, sergeant?" he said.

Sergeant McKenzie looked around.

"Oh, it's you, sir," he said. "I saw you when you came aboard before we left. I told myself that you must be well pleased to sail with the first contingent."

"We are indeed," replied Hal. "I suppose the same goes for you, sergeant?"

"It does, sir. You see I go as a private, however."

"Well, sergeant," said Hal, "it wouldn't be much of an army without some privates, now would it?"

"Hardly," returned the sergeant with a grin. "However, I am afraid, sir, that you must not call me sergeant. It might not be pleasing to all my companions."

"You are probably right," Hal replied. "I have a feeling, however, that it will not be long before you are raised from the ranks. A man of your experience is more valuable than merely carrying a gun."

"Thank you, sir. We never know what a day may bring forth."

He brought his hand up to salute and Hal returned to Chester's side.

"How did he manage to get aboard?" asked Chester.

"I don't know," said Hal. "He didn't volunteer any information, so I didn't ask him. I imagine, however, that the letter I gave him had some effect."

In this the lad was right. It was indeed his letter to the British minister that accounted for McKenzie's presence with the first American contingent on the way to France.

It was when the flotilla was but two days out from port that the very thing that American officers had been praying against came to pass. Eight bells had just struck. Suddenly there was a flash and a puff of smoke from the destroyer closest

to the transport which bore General Pershing and his staff.

Instantly all aboard the transport became action. Men were piped on deck and brought into position to guard against they knew not what.

Guns aboard the transport were made ready for action, for while the destroyers guarding the troop ships would mainly be relied upon to beat off whatever threatened, it was deemed wise to have the transports prepared.

Destroyers, already cleared for action, as they had been since leaving port, rushed to the aid of the vessel that had fired the first shot. Some remained in position, however, to guard against a possible attack from other points.

The trouble soon became apparent. The first destroyer had sighted the periscope of a submarine and opened fire. Whether the shot had gone home could not be told, for the U-boat had instantly submerged. Its disappearance, therefore, might have been the result of the shell hurled by the American vessel, or it might have been ordered by the vessel's commander.

But five minutes later a second periscope was sighted some distance away. Again the destroyers opened fire. Suddenly the ship on which Hal and Chester found themselves dashed ahead at full speed and turned sharply to port. A moment later something went hissing through the water alongside.

It was a torpedo launched by the enemy. Had it not been for the prompt action of the captain, it would have gone home and the big transport, General Pershing, his staff, and all aboard might have perished.

Two destroyers sped toward the submarine. As they did so, a second, and then a third appeared. It seemed that the American flotilla had run upon a veritable nest of the underseas monsters.

There was the sound of an explosion aboard the first torpedo boat destroyer. A shell had struck a glancing blow forward along the water line.

Two shells in quick succession were seen to hit the submarine, now barely visible above the water. The submarine disappeared. A moment later the second submarine disappeared in the same fashion.

Cheers broke out from the troops aboard the transport.

The third submarine launched another torpedo. This sped straight toward one of the transports, but quick maneuvering by the commander of the vessel kept the ship out of harm's way.

Two destroyers fired simultaneously at the submarine. It staggered as both shells struck home. Then it, too, disappeared from sight.

A second mighty cheer gave proof that the first battle between Americans and Germans had been won by the men from the United States.

"That's ticklish work, if you ask me," declared Hal.

"Rather," returned Chester dryly. "But I guess we are safe enough now."

"Unless there are more of them about," said Hal.

"I don't suppose the destroyers will relax their vigilance. But what would have happened had we not had their assistance?"

"We might have got one of the enemy," said Hal, and added grimly: "but the others probably would have got us."

The men piped to quarters were allowed to go below, or to do whatever else they might desire. It was apparent that the American officers were not in fear of another immediate attack.

"I guess," said Hal, "that will end our troubles until we set foot on shore."

"Believe me, I hope so," declared Chester. "This sea life may be all right, but not for me. Let me feel solid ground beneath my feet and I'm not afraid to fight; but I don't know anything about water—and I don't know that I care to learn."

"I'm with you there," Hal agreed. "I can swim and all that the same as you can, but to tell you the truth, I can get all the water I want in a bathtub."

CHAPTER XXI

SAFE ASHORE

When Hal and Chester came on deck some mornings later land was in sight. Chester saw it first and called Hal's attention to it.

"England, I suppose," he said.

"Most likely," returned Hal, "although there is nothing sure about it. May be the coast of Scotland."

"Well, it amounts to the same thing," Chester declared.

"Guess we'll know soon enough. Say, do you know that I wish Stubbs had been able to come with us?"

"So do I. It's too bad General Pershing decided against war correspondents accompanying the expedition. Can't see why, either."

"Probably because he felt it would be unwise to have news, not given out by him personally, sent back home."

"I suppose that's it. However, it wouldn't surprise me to see Stubbs over here before long."

"Well, I'm sure we shall both be glad to see him and we'll do all we can for him if it does not interfere with our duties."

As the transports approached closer to the shore

all became bustle and confusion aboard. Men raked their belongings together, strapped on their knapsacks and made ready for the landing. Two hours later the first transport docked. This was the one aboard which were General Pershing and his staff.

The pier at which the transport landed, and other piers on both sides and the streets beyond, were thronged with cheering crowds. Word of the coming of the transports with American soldiers in some manner had preceded the expedition, and for several days anxious eyes had scanned the sea. When the smoke of the American flotilla had been made out in such quantity as to signify that there were many vessels approaching, the word was passed quickly through the city. Military authorities as well as naval commanders got in touch with the flotilla by wireless and upon short notice preparations were made to give the Yankee fighters a rousing reception when they stepped ashore.

There was a mighty cheer as the first American trooper set foot on shore. Others now streamed down the gangplank, marched a short distance and stood at "rest."

Five minutes after the first American detachment had landed, General Pershing, surrounded by members of his staff, strode down the gangplank.

The cheer that greeted these officers was even greater than the first. Ashore, a British army officer approached General Pershing and the two

saluted. Then, as the men from America and the men from England looked on, these two soldiers shook hands.

"We are glad to welcome you here," said the British officer.

"And we are glad to be here," was General Pershing's reply.

General Pershing gave several sharp commands to various members of his staff, who moved away to fulfill them. The British officer informed the American commander where to quarter his troops and announced that preparations were at that moment being made to see that they were well cared for.

Every place that the American soldiers went that day, and upon many days to follow, they were received with cheers and applause. The key to the city was theirs. There was nothing, almost, that the people of the city were unwilling to do for them. They were made to feel as much at home as though they were still in America.

Hal and Chester, several hours later, found themselves installed in comfortable quarters near the edge of town. The troops themselves were quartered nearby. It was announced that the troops would remain here overnight, but that upon the following morning they would move to London. It was unlikely, the lads foresaw, that they would reach France before the end of the week.

As the days of leisure in England gradually lengthened into weeks, Hal and Chester began to grow restless.

"We have been honored enough," Hal declared. "Why don't they send us to France? What's the use of fooling around here, I'd like to know?"

Chester shrugged.

"Too deep for me," he replied. "I'm with you. We belong in France and not parading around here for the amusement of the crowd."

"Suppose we are kept parading for the moral effect it may have upon the people," said Hal. "However, I wish they'd send us across the channel."

"I guess they will, in good time," said Chester.

He was right. Three days later the boys found themselves, with the other American troops, in the streets of Paris. It was announced that upon the following morning there would be a grand parade through the streets of the French capital, after which the American soldiers would entrain for the front.

"By front," said Chester when he heard the news, "you can bet they don't mean the firing line."

"Hardly," Hal agreed. "We'll probably be marched out among the French troops and then stationed well along toward the rear. I imagine, however, that it will not be long before we are sent into the trenches."

"But," Chester protested, "surely you don't expect the French staff to entrust important positions to untried troops?"

"No," returned Hal, "but I figure they will send forward a few detachments at a time for seasoning purposes. The French will be in command of the trench, but they probably will sprinkle American soldiers among them to let them get the hang of things."

It developed later that Hal was a good guesser. This method, in fact, was the one followed by the French general staff.

The morning of the day the American troops were to leave Paris dawned fair and warm. The passing of the Yankees was to be reviewed by General Haig, who had come from the front for that purpose; Marshal Joffre, the French commander-in-chief, and General Pershing.

The streets of the city along which the troops were to pass were gaily decorated early in the morning. Windows were thrown wide, and pretty French girls and women filled them completely. Along the thoroughfares were dense masses of people. It was to be a gala event, and the French people, always a hospitable race, were striving to outdo themselves in making welcome the men who had come from across the sea to help them in their struggle for freedom.

The American troops were under arms early. In

full field equipment, and with their artillery and cavalry leading the way, they marched shortly before 8 o'clock.

In front of the President's palace, Marshal Joffre and General Haig, surrounded by their staffs, took their stand. At almost the last minute they were joined by President Poincaire.

The three officers stood at attention as the long line of troops began their passage. In front of the crowds that lined both sides of the street were divisions of French soldiers. Grim-faced and silent, it was nevertheless apparent that these men were none the less pleased at the presence of American troops than were the cheering civilians. As each line passed in review the men brought their guns to "present" and the officers saluted.

As Colonel Beauregard's division came in front of the reviewing stand, the long line suddenly halted. Apparently there was something further along that was the cause of this delay. For a moment the men marked time, and then were permitted to halt.

General Haig and Marshal Joffre, closely followed by President Poincaire and General Pershing, moved closer to the troops. In this manner, Hal and Chester came under the view of the French commander. The latter stared at them a moment, and then stepped forward to see the better. He turned to General Haig.

"Surely I have seen those two young men before,"

he said, pointing the lads out to the British field marshal.

General Haig gazed at the two lads and then smiled.

"I know them well, sir," he replied. "They are young men who have served the allied cause well in the three years of war." He mentioned their names.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the French commander. "I remember them now. They also have rendered me valuable service." He turned to General Pershing. "I see before me," he said, "two young men who already have seen service in this war—both with my French troops and the British. I wish to recommend them highly to you, sir."

General Pershing glanced at the two lads.

"I shall remember, sir," he said to Marshal Joffre. "If ever I have need of two good men, I shall call on them."

"Let me add my voice to Marshal Joffre's," said General Haig.

"Thank you, sir," said General Pershing. "I am glad to find that I have men of proven courage in my command."

At that moment Hal glanced squarely at General Haig. The latter caught the boy's eye, smiled and saluted. Hal followed suit, his face flushing a trifle, and nudged Chester, who stood near. Chester also caught General Haig's eye, and the two saluted.

Marshal Joffre observed this exchange of courtesies.

"Mon Dieu, my general," he said, "I shall not be outdone in courtesy to two such gallant boys."

He approached even closer to the lines of the American troops and saluted the two lads.

Hal and Chester returned the salute. Not a man in the division that failed to observe this act. The boys' stock rose considerably in their eyes.

At that moment came the command to march and the troops moved on.

CHAPTER XXII

IN CAMP

The American army went into camp. Tents were pitched. Kitchen wagons were wheeled into position and the men made themselves comfortable in their new quarters.

Now came days of strenuous drilling. British and French officers were detailed to give the first American troops lessons in the art of warfare as conducted in the greatest conflict of all time.

The soldiers were taught to charge with the bayonet at marks representing German forces; were instructed in formations new to American manuals, and were shown how to adjust gas masks, which would be necessary when they took positions in the trenches, to guard against the deadly vapors poured upon them by the foe.

But when French or British officers attempted to instruct the Americans in the art of hurling hand grenades—bomb throwing—they realized quickly that here, at least, was one thing in which the new troops were more proficient than the veterans themselves.

Not for nothing had the majority of the men, who comprised the first American expeditionary force, played ball in their younger days. They needed no

practice to hurl a bomb with deadly accuracy. Their skill in this excited the wonder and praise of the French and British.

Hal and Chester, strolling about the camp one day, came suddenly upon a squad of men, who seemed to be having a great time. They were laughing and shouting in glee. The lads approached to see what was going on. After one glance, both smiled.

Ten or twelve men had banded together, and now were engaged in that pleasing occupation, with which most schoolboys are familiar, known as putting others "through the mill." This art consisted simply of capturing a man and then, while standing with legs wide apart, making the prisoner crawl through the while the others pounded him on his back. Once a man had "gone through," it was his privilege, if he so desired, to take his place in line and wreak vengeance on the next victim.

Half a dozen men were "put through" while Hal and Chester looked on. Then the men caught a Tartar. He was rather slight and fair of hair, younger than the rest. He had approached to see what was going on. Instantly one of the men spied him, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Your turn next, Enright," he said.

Enright shook off the hand.

"Not today, Bill," he said. "I'm not feeling well, and I'd rather wait until some other time."

The man called Bill laughed.

"That's no excuse," he said. "Come on now. Go through."

Still Enright protested.

"I wouldn't mind if I were feeling well," he declared.

But the others refused to accept his excuse. Several more laid hands on him.

Enright's fist shot out and struck the first man on the nose. The man staggered back, but the others closed in.

It appeared that, in spite of his ailment, Enright was going to give a right good account of himself. Hal and Chester had no mind to interfere, for they realized that it would be, to say the least, undignified.

A second man went down as Enright struck out. He got to his feet with an angry gleam in his eye. He glanced around. His eye fell upon a small stone. He moved toward it and picked it up. Then he advanced toward the struggling figures again.

Hal had not noticed this, but Chester had. Quickly the lad advanced upon the struggling combatants.

The arm that held the stone drew back and would have descended had Chester not seized it with his right hand. Twisting sharply, Chester turned the man so that they were face to face.

"None of that!" the lad said quietly. "Play fair."

The melee ended as suddenly as it had begun. The others turned upon Chester's prisoner.

"Shame on you, Tom," said one. "You keep away from here if you can't play fair."

The man called Tom still held the stone, which was proof enough of what he had been about to do. Chester again twisted sharply, and the stone fell to the ground. Tom turned an evil eye on Chester.

"Officer or no officer. I'll get even with you for that!" he exclaimed.

Chester did not deign to reply. He released his hold upon the other's wrist and stepped back. Tom rubbed his sore wrist ruefully and stalked away.

Young Enright approached Chester and saluted.

"I'm obliged to you, sir," he said. "He might have done me considerable injury with that rock."

Others of the men also declared that Chester had acted wisely and well.

"We'll ostracize him for that," said one. "I always knew Tom had a mean streak in him, but I didn't know he would act as cowardly as that."

Chester chatted with the men for some moments, and then rejoined Hal. The two moved away.

"You've made an enemy, Chester," said Hal.

"I suppose so," Chester agreed, "but I couldn't help it, Hal."

"I should have done the same thing in your place," Hal said.

When Hal and Chester returned to their quarters,

they found awaiting them an orderly from General Pershing, who informed them that the general desired their presence at once. The lads hastened to the general's quarters.

They were admitted immediately.

"I understand," said General Pershing, "that you boys already have seen service in this war."

"We have, sir," Hal replied; "both with the British and French, and with the Belgians and Russians, sir."

"I was told by General Haig," continued General Pershing, "that you both have been found both courageous and resourceful."

"Thank you, sir," said Chester.

"Marshal Joffre also has spoken highly of you both," said General Pershing.

"I would have thought he had forgotten us by this time, sir," said Hal.

"Well, he hasn't," returned his commander. "It was while the troops marched through the streets of Paris that both Marshal Joffre and General Haig spoke of you to me. They both told me that you two could be relied upon should I have any work that required special attention."

"Then I presume, sir," said Chester, "that you have work for us now?"

"Nothing in the line of danger at this moment," replied their commander with a half smile. "I simply wish you to carry to General Haig a communi-

cation that I do not wish to trust to the wireless. It is not necessary that you both go, however, unless you wish. You can suit yourselves about that."

"Very well, sir," said Hal.

General Pershing took a document from his desk and gave it to Hal.

"You will deliver this to General Haig at once," he said.

"Very well, sir," said Hal, putting the paper in his pocket and saluting.

"You may as well go with him," said General Pershing. "Bring me back an answer."

The lads saluted and left the tent.

"Not much excitement here, Chester," said Hal.

"No; I was in hopes he had something worth while for us to do."

"All in good time, I guess, Chester," said Hal. "You never can tell when something is likely to turn up. Now I suppose the sooner we get this to General Haig the better."

The lads mounted their horses and rode off.

The distance to the headquarters of the British commander-in-chief was not great, and it was only a little after 1 o'clock when they reached there. They were admitted immediately to the presence of General Haig. The British commander expressed his pleasure at seeing them again, read the document, scribbled on a piece of paper, put it in an envelope, sealed it, and gave it to Hal.

"You will give this to General Pershing," he said.

The lads saluted and took their departure.

As they rode along they came suddenly upon an aeroplane, apparently abandoned.

"Hello," said Chester. "Wonder what this is doing here? By Jove! I'm not in this expedition. I've a notion to take a spin."

"You'd better come with me," said Hal. "That contraption belongs to someone, and you are likely to get in trouble."

"No," said Chester, "I'm going aloft."

Hal could not dissuade him, so Hal rode on and Chester approached the aeroplane.

CHAPTER XXIII

CHESTER MAKES A CAPTURE

CHESTER had been aloft perhaps half an hour. In that time he had approached close to the section of ground that separated the British and German first-line trenches.

Suddenly, coming directly toward him, at a great height, the lad made out what appeared to be a great cigar sailing swiftly.

"By Jove!" muttered the lad. "I wonder——"

He touched the controls and the aeroplane ascended higher into the air. At the moment he first sighted the object, Chester believed he had established its identity. And he had been right.

The long cigar-shaped object approaching him was a German Zeppelin—one of the monsters of the air that the Kaiser, in the first days of the war, had depended upon to bring England to her knees and which, as yet, had failed signally to accomplish its object.

"Wonder where that fellow is going?" Chester said to himself. "He's up to no good, that much is sure. However, I'm no match for him. I can probably outrun him, but it's more than likely he has guns aboard that will send me down if I get too close. I'll keep an eye on him."

It was perfectly plain to Chester that the commander of the Zeppelin had sighted him. The huge bird made straight for him. Chester grinned.

"You won't catch me that way, Mr. Fritz," he said. Fritz is the British Tommy's name for a German.

Chester increased the speed of his craft, and volplaned toward the earth. Then, at a distance of perhaps 500 feet, he sped straight ahead, and again sent the aeroplane high into the air again. So swiftly had the lad maneuvered the machine that he was far above the Zeppelin before the pilot of the craft could change his course.

Chester determined upon a bold ruse.

He forced his speedy craft to its limit and overtook the great, lumbering dreadnaught of the sky. Around and around its bulk he flew, like a sparrow attacking a stork. As he passed time after time, Chester became conscious of the fact that there was only a single man aboard the Zeppelin. This gave the lad courage.

He checked the speed of his craft, and, guiding it with one hand, drew his revolver, and took a snapshot at the pilot.

The Zeppelin swerved. Its planes were depressed, and it glided down to earth in a small valley. The forward gondola (or compartment) rested in a small straw pile, and the two amidship gondolas were

twenty feet aloft, the stern impaling itself upon the hillside pines.

Chester, in pursuit, stopped his craft at the edge of the valley so suddenly, and clambered out with such alacrity, that he gashed his forehead against a wooden strut.

With blood streaming down his face, he again yanked out his automatic and ran forward. He reached the Zeppelin just as the sole occupant of the giant of the heavens had finished firing six revolver shots into his engine, attempting to cripple it.

"Stop that!" cried Chester in German.

The Teuton wheeled, dropped his own revolver and dodged behind the Zeppelin. From his pocket then he produced a second automatic, and from the shelter of the aircraft took a snapshot at the lad.

Chester felt the bullet chip the lobe of his left ear. Instantly the lad dropped to the ground, and a second and a third bullet sped over his head.

Apparently believing that one of his bullets had gone home, the German did not fire again immediately. He was too cautious, however, to expose himself, so he remained quietly, waiting for Chester to move.

Chester knew that the German undoubtedly had him covered, and that his present position was, indeed, a ticklish one. It was up to him to find shelter immediately, and the lad knew it. As he lay on

the ground, he turned the situation over in his mind, and hit upon a plan.

Knowing that the German was watching him, he raised his head with all appearances of being wounded. Believing that he had hit the lad, Chester argued that the enemy would withhold his fire. As he gazed about, Chester saw a large tree perhaps fifteen yards away. Once there he would be temporarily safe. His chances would be as good as the German's.

Still pretending to be desperately wounded, Chester staggered to his knees and then to his feet. Still covering him with his revolver, the German hesitated. He had only a few more shots left, and he did not like to waste them upon a man that, apparently, could do him no harm.

A moment later the German realized his mistake. Chester suddenly took to his heels, and made for the protection of the tree, zig-zagging as he ran.

Twice the German fired, but both bullets missed, although Chester heard the whine of the last as it sped past. He flung himself behind the tree. He took off his cap, and rubbed the moisture from his forehead.

"Close call. No mistake about that," he told himself. "Now, the question is, how am I going to get that fellow? Guess the same thing is troubling him, though."

The lad considered the situation from all angles.

Taking off his cap, he put it upon a small stick he picked up off the ground, and poked it cautiously from behind the tree.

There was no result.

"Can't fool him with that trick," Chester muttered. "I'll have to try something else."

He threw himself flat upon the ground so as to make the smallest possible target, and then peered toward the Zeppelin. He saw nothing. For perhaps a minute he lay still watching. Still there was no sign of the German.

"By Jove! Wonder if he has made off in the shelter of that machine?" muttered the lad.

He got to his feet. As he did so something "zinged" past his ear. Chester dropped to the ground again. "No, he's still there," he said.

Again the lad stood up, keeping in the shelter of the big tree. This time he drew no shot, for he did not expose enough of himself to make a fair target.

"By George! I've got to do something," he told himself. "I can't hang around here all day."

He gazed around. Almost directly behind him was another large tree. Chester considered, and looked the ground and the trees over carefully.

"I believe I can do it," he muttered.

He moved back to the next tree, still keeping the first between him and his foe. Once behind the second tree, he was out of sight of the German. The lad swung himself up among the branches.

"Now if I can just go quietly enough," he said.

The plan the boy had adopted was as simple as it was dangerous, and it demanded extreme caution and silence if it was to be carried out successfully. Briefly, it was this: He would advance through the tree-tops like a monkey. The trees grew so close together and their foliage was so thick that he felt sure that, by proceeding silently, he could cover the distance to the German without danger.

Chester swung himself into the first tree with agility and skill.

"I didn't put in a few summers in the northwest for nothing," he told himself.

His revolver he carried in his hand as he advanced. It impeded his progress somewhat, but Chester felt safer with it in his hand.

"I won't be caught off my guard," he declared.

Two, three, four, five trees Chester passed. Then, peering through the foliage, he was able to make out the form of the German, as the latter strained forward and gazed toward where he had last seen Chester. The lad raised his revolver and took deliberate aim. Then he lowered his arm.

"No, I'll just get that fellow alive," he said.

Moving as cautiously as before, he swung himself into the tree over the German's head. Then he descended a couple of branches. He was now directly above the German. Grasping his revolver firmly in his right hand, Chester dropped.

The enemy went to the ground under the impact. Apparently he was more quick-witted than the average German, for he seemed to realize in a moment the ruse that had been played on him.

He made a strenuous effort to bring his revolver to bear upon Chester.

"No, you don't," said the lad, perceiving the man's intention.

He seized the man's revolver arm.

The German suddenly kicked out with his right foot and caught Chester squarely on the shin. Chester uttered a subdued cry of pain, and released his hold on the German's revolver arm. Instantly the man moved his arm and pulled the trigger.

But Chester had realized the ruse just in time, and threw himself aside and avoided the bullet. The pain in the lad's leg disappeared as if by magic. Chester raised his revolver; so did the German. It appeared that the encounter would go to the man who first pressed the trigger.

Two reports sounded almost as one, but Chester had fired the fraction of a second before his adversary. He felt the breeze of a bullet as it sped past, but he was uninjured.

The German gave a low moan and lay still.

Chester arose to his feet.

CHAPTER XXIV

AN UNEXPECTED HONOR

CHESTER approached the German and looked him over closely.

"Well, he'll bother me no more," he said, and walked on. He stood and surveyed the giant Zeppelin, his now, by the spoils of war.

"I've got this thing, now," he told himself. "The question is, what am I going to do with it?"

He examined the dirigible carefully to see if the German had succeeded in putting the engine out of commission.

"He must have been a deuced bad shot, that fellow," he told himself. "This engine looks perfectly fit to me. I've a notion to try it out."

With Chester, to think was to act. He clambered into the pilot's seat. A moment later the machine was soaring into the air.

"By Jove!" said Chester, "this is great. I'll just take it to our camp."

He steered the Zeppelin in the direction of the American section of the field. Soon, looking down, he made out forms of men scurrying about.

"Hello," he said. "Looks like there was something up. Wonder if our men have been ordered forward?"

Suddenly there was a puff of smoke from below, and bullets began to whistle close to Chester.

"Now what do you think of that?" Chester exclaimed. "What are they shooting at me for?"

He put his head over the side and yelled down, forgetful for the moment of the fact that his voice would not carry that far.

More shots was the reply.

"Great Scott!" said Chester. "They take me for an enemy, of course. They don't expect an American to be sailing along in a Zeppelin. What a fool I am."

He drew his handkerchief from his pocket, and, leaning over the side, waved violently. Cheers from below told him his signal had been seen. Chester smiled grimly to himself.

"It's going to be a big disappointment for them when I go down," he said. "This is the first time American troops have had an opportunity to use those guns, and the men think they've licked a German." He laughed. "Wonder what they'll say when I go down?"

The Zeppelin settled toward the earth and a few minutes later came to rest. Instantly a squad of men rushed forward and covered Chester, while an officer, advancing, said:

"You are my prisoner, sir."

The officer was Colonel Beauregard, Chester's commander.

"Very well, sir," said Chester calmly, and added: "But don't hurt my Zeppelin, Colonel. I had a hard job getting it here."

Colonel Beauregard stepped back in great surprise.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "It can't be—but it is, Lieutenant Crawford."

"Yes, sir," said Chester quietly.

"But what are you doing in that Zeppelin, sir?" demanded Colonel Beauregard.

"Well, sir," replied Chester, "I took it away from a German a little while ago, and I thought I would treat myself to a little ride."

"Took it away from a German?" questioned the colonel.

"Yes, sir."

"Explain yourself, sir."

Chester explained, while others of the troop, officers and men alike, crowded near to hear of the exploit.

"It was a brave action," said Colonel Beauregard at last, "but it was very foolish to come flying over our lines like that. Naturally, we took you for an enemy."

"So I found, sir, when I was aloft," said Chester dryly. "I hadn't thought of that until the men began to shoot."

"You would better be a bit more careful next time you go a-sailing in a German Zeppelin," said the

colonel with a smile. "I'll wager it would be safer above the German lines in such a contraption than it would be here."

"Well," said Chester, "I'd rather be here, sir."

"And what are you going to do with the Zeppelin?" asked the colonel.

"Why, sir," said Chester, "I thought I would present it to the regiment, sir. We may have a man in the crowd who is handy with a paint brush, and he can touch it up so that everyone will know it is the property of the Twenty-first cavalry, sir."

"If you please, sir," said one of the men, advancing and touching his cap, "that shall be my job, sir."

"Very well, sir," said Colonel Beauregard. "But you must have a name for the dirigible. Have you thought of that?"

"It shall be named for the man who captured it, sir," said the man who had offered to paint the craft—his name was Jenkins.

"Crawford, eh?" said the colonel. "That's not a very good name for a Zeppelin."

"Maybe he has a first name, sir," said Jenkins, grinning.

"That's so," said Colonel Beauregard. "What is it, Lieutenant?"

"Chester, sir."

"A good name for the purpose," declared Jenkins. "Chester it shall be, sir. Am I right, men?"

"You bet." "Right you are, Jenkins," came the replies, and the men cheered Chester again.

Chester flushed.

"You do me too much honor, men," he said. "Just paint the name of the regiment and let it go at that."

"Not much, sir," said Jenkins. "We won't have that. It shall be 'The Chester,' sir, and I'll warrant it will give a good account of itself when it goes Hun-hunting."

"Very well," said Chester. "Thank you, men."

"Thank you for the Zeppelin, sir," said Jenkins, still acting as spokesman.

He saluted and moved away. Colonel Beauregard motioned Chester to accompany him to his quarters.

"Lieutenant," said Colonel Beauregard, when they had taken seats in the colonel's quarters, "some of our men are about to be ordered to the trenches to receive their baptism of fire. I understand that our division will probably be among the first to go."

"I didn't figure they would order cavalrymen into the trenches, sir," said Chester.

"They won't be cavalrymen when they get there," returned the colonel. "It is a good idea, too. There probably will be little opportunity for cavalry to get into action for some time, and it is just as well for the men to be put under fire first."

"I suppose you're right, sir," Chester agreed.

"Very well. Now, then, the situation is this. You and your friend, Lieutenant Paine, have already seen active service. For this reason, I am inclined to believe you are the proper officers to put in command of the first men to go."

"But our rank, sir," protested Chester. "We are only lieutenants."

"True; but the first men to go will be so few in number that it is hardly likely an officer of higher rank than captain will accompany them. Of course, when they are reinforced, higher officers will take command. If my men are called upon, and not in such force as to take me also, I shall put you in command, with Lieutenant Paine directly under you."

"Very well, sir," returned Chester.

"You will, of course, receive your orders from whoever chances to be in command of the entire American unit."

"I understand that, sir. You don't know who he may be?"

"Not yet; but I probably shall know in plenty of time."

Chester, realizing that the interview was now at an end, rose to go. He saluted his commander and left the tent.

In his own quarters he found Hal, to whom he related what Colonel Beauregard had just told him,

and the adventures he had had with the German Zeppelin.

Hal expressed his pleasure that the men were soon to go into the first-line trenches, and the hope that they would be ordered forward soon.

This hope was realized even sooner than either lad had expected.

Late the following afternoon Colonel Beauregard again summoned Chester to his quarters, and gave these instructions:

"Lieutenant, you will put yourself at the head of Company H and report, afoot, to Captain O'Neill at 7 o'clock to-night. Your duty will lead you to the first-line trenches. Lieutenant Paine will go with you as second in command."

Chester carried the good news to Hal.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE TRENCHES

Moonbeams played softly across the field as the American troops moved forward. The men marched quietly, and without questions. They did not know where they were going, although each man could see that the road lay to the front. There was little hope among the troops that they would go into the trenches soon, but as the march continued with no indication of a pause, their hopes rose. Not a man among them who would not have been willing to cut off a day of his life for the opportunity.

The men advanced under command of Captain Michael O'Neill, as Irish as his name implied. He was a favorite with the men, and a better officer for the task could not have been chosen.

Besides the troop headed by Hal and Chester, there were, perhaps, seven or eight more—less than a thousand men, all told. It was the purpose of the British and French general staffs, as well as that of General Pershing, to give the American troops a touch of trench life a few at a time, so that, when occasion demanded, they would be ready to relieve their British or French Allies.

The position chosen for the first American troops to take up work in the trenches was far south of the

most southern British lines. They would relieve companies of French poilus rather than take over British lines at this time.

Trench relief, at times, was dangerous work, and, for this reason, was done mostly after nightfall. Both sides had found that an opportune time for attacking was when changes were being made in the trenches, and now, after three years of war, commanding officers had learned that it was much better to send the relief forward under cover of darkness.

Therefore, the Americans, guided by a French officer, advanced silently, and as silently filed into the first-line trenches. Immediately as many companies of French filed out. The Americans were received with joy by the French troops, but the demonstration was a silent one. Here and there emotional Frenchmen threw themselves upon the necks of their American Allies, much to the confusion of the latter—for the Anglo-Saxon is not demonstrative in that way.

Here, in the network of trenches, upon which French soldiers had spent many hours of toil to make comfortable and home-like, the Americans would spend their days until ordered to advance or retreat.

Hal struck up an acquaintance with a French lieutenant. Under cover of darkness, it was impossible to see how far it was to the German trenches, so Hal made inquiries.

"How far is it?" he asked.

"Ninety feet," replied the Frenchman.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Hal. "Just the distance from the home plate to first base."

"What's that?" asked the Frenchman.

Hal laughed.

"Little American baseball talk," he said, and explained. Then he added: "Pretty close."

The officer shrugged his shoulders, reached down, picked up a small stone and tossed it into the German trench. Presently, one of the Germans threw it back.

Occasionally rifles flared from the trenches. Hal, accustomed as he was to being under fire, instinctively ducked, as a bullet whistled overhead. Not so the Frenchman.

"Don't worry," he said. "Those German snipers across the way are very poor shots. They haven't hit any of us for nearly a month."

"Their luck is likely to change any time," replied Hal.

As Hal gazed about him, he thought that an American coal mine came more nearly being like the French trenches than anything else he could think of. The Frenchman caught his expression, and seemed to read his thoughts.

"We're vastly more comfortable here than we would be out in the open," he said. "German shells can't touch us."

"This is not my first experience," said Hal, smiling.

"That so? Well, we've mined under every foot of the German trenches. We could blow them to smithereens if we wanted to."

"Then, why don't you?" asked Hal.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

"You'll have to ask somebody higher up," he laughed, and added: "Of course, the Germans have our trenches mined, too."

He took Hal into a little room many feet below the surface, fitted up with numerous scientific instruments. He put a sort of telephone receiver over his head.

"This instrument records the slightest movement of the earth," he said. "We can tell when the Germans are digging through the rock, and we can judge how far they are from us."

He listened intently for a few minutes and then glanced at his watch. Hal followed suit. It was 11.30 o'clock.

"They've knocked off work for their soup," said the Frenchman. "Funny about those Germans. They are so methodical in routine they quit work at precisely the same minute, day or night. That's why we'll beat them to the fuses when it's time for a big 'blow up' in this sector. While they're fooling with red tape, we'll be lighting matches."

Hal had been greatly interested in the French of-

ficer's explanations. He realized as never before—and he had seen considerable service in the trenches—just how far mechanical ability and mathematical precision would go to win the war, rather than the force of numbers.

"Everything is done now according to rule, isn't it?" he asked.

"Absolutely," returned the Frenchman. "It's not like the olden days—and do you know, I've often thought I would rather have fought then, when there was a chance for a man to win individual glory."

"There is the same chance now," replied Hal, "only it must be won in altogether different fashion."

Again the Frenchman shrugged.

"Mon Dieu!" he said. "It may be so. But of the many who go and try there are so few who return."

The sector in which the American troops found themselves was one of the quietest on the front. The first night there were only occasional volleys of rifle fire. The enemy's big guns were silent. Neither did the French or Americans open with their artillery. In fact, the Americans did not fire at all.

The following morning Hal again found himself beside the French officer. Together they gazed toward the German trenches.

"Zing! Zing!"

Almost simultaneously, two rifles in the first-line German trench cracked. A bullet sped close to Hal.

"Crack! Crack!"

French soldiers fired into the Germans.

A German helmet appeared in the lines beyond.

Again the French fired.

The German helmet disappeared.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the French officer. "I believe we got him that time."

A derisive shout arose from the German trench.

"No," he admitted, disappointed. "I guess I was mistaken. They wouldn't be making fun of us that way. But we'll get that German yet. Only last week one of our snipers nipped his helmet."

In front of both French and German first-line trenches, Hal saw barbed-wire entanglements twenty-five feet deep, leaving a "No-Man's Land" of not to exceed forty feet.

Here and there in the entanglments were bits of clothing. And at one place lay the helmet and the bayonet of a German.

"Poor devil," said the French officer, "he never got any farther than our entanglements. His body lay out there all day, but was gone the next morning."

"It might as easily have been a Frenchman," said Hal quietly.

"Yes," returned his companion, "or an American."

Hal nodded.

"Exactly," he made reply.

The lad saluted the young French officer and departed. He found Chester making himself as comfortable as possible in their newly established quarters. He told his chum what he had seen.

"We'll be in the midst of it ourselves before long," said Chester.

"Wouldn't be surprised," said Hal.

"You bet," continued Chester. "They can talk all they please about sending us here just so we may receive our baptism of fire; but when two opposing armies get as close as we are, there is bound to be fighting unless they are all dead."

"I agree with you, Chester."

"And," Chester continued, "our fellows are just aching to get a chance at the enemy. They think they can chase 'em clear back to Berlin."

"The sooner they get that notion out of their heads the better," declared Hal grimly.

"That's what I told a few of them, but they can't see it that way. However, it won't be long before something happens, or I miss my guess."

As it developed, Chester was right.

CHAPTER XXVI

STUBBS IS IN A HURRY

The morning of the first day the American troops were in the trenches passed quietly. The Americans still had not fired a shot, and there was only intermittent firing from the French and Germans. Farther to the north the sound of big guns could be heard, indicating that the British were in contact with the foe, but in the sector held by the French the quiet was unusually pronounced.

As Hal and Chester finished their dinner, an orderly approached from Captain O'Brien. The boys followed the man to the captain's quarters.

"Lieutenant Crawford," he said, "you will detail a squad of your men to take charge of the French '75,' now commanded by Lieutenant Merceau. It is immediately to your left. You will bring it into position and open fire on the German trenches."

A French "75," as both lads knew, was one of the great French guns—guns that ranked easily with the German 42-centimetres.

Chester's face glowed with pride. It was an unusual honor that had been bestowed upon him—that one of his men would be allowed to fire the first shot of America's war on Germany.

Hal followed him to the position indicated, where

he found that Lieutenant Merceau was the same man with whom he had been in conversation earlier in the day. Chester saluted the lieutenant, and told him the nature of his errand. Meanwhile, Hal, at Chester's command, returned to the American section of the trench and led his men forward.

The word had been passed through the trenches that an American soldier soon was to fire the first shot of the war. It was impossible for all the American troops to leave their positions, but each listened keenly for the sound of the big gun.

Chester looked his men over carefully. He had been signally honored by his Irish captain, and he felt impelled to return the compliment. At the far end of the line stood a young man with flaming red hair. His Irish ancestry was plainly apparent.

Chester motioned to him to approach.

"Your name?" he asked.

"O'Shea, sir."

"Irish, eh?" said Chester with a smile.

"Perfectly Irish, sir," was the respectful reply.

"Very good," said Chester. "You shall touch off the gun."

The young Irishman's face turned as red almost as his hair.

"You mean that I shall fire the first shot, sir?" he demanded.

"Exactly."

O'Shea threw his cap high in the air, and he didn't

seem to care where it came down or what became of it.

"Hurray!" he shouted. "Who said an Irishman wouldn't see all the fighting he wanted over here?"

He approached the gun, which had not yet been trained. Willing hands now moved the big gun into position.

Suddenly there was a commotion from the rear. Hal and Chester looked about. Came a man in civilian garb, riding breeches, and he was covered with dust.

"By George!" said Hal. "It's Stubbs!"

It was, indeed, the little war correspondent. A French officer approached him, and demanded an explanation of his presence there. Stubbs swept a quick eye over the men in the trenches, and he espied Hal and Chester. He pushed the French officer aside and made toward the lads, in spite of the Frenchman's protests.

"Hello, boys," he said, extending a hand.

The lads shook hands with him.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Chester.

"Well," said Stubbs, "while General Pershing has ruled against war correspondents with his troops, there are still correspondents with the French and British. I have my pass," he showed it to Chester, "vised by General Petain.

"So you see I have a right here," he said.

"But what's all the grand rush about?" Hal

wanted to know. "You look as though you had been coming in a hurry."

"So I have," said Stubbs. "Tell me something. Have Americans fired at the enemy yet?"

"Not yet," said Chester, "but what——"

"Then I'm in time," said Stubbs gleefully. "That was the cause of my hurry. I was ordered by my managing editor to be close when the first American shot was fired and, by George! I'm here."

"Then you arrived not a moment too soon, Stubbs," said Hal. "It is about to be fired now. See!"

He pointed to where the big "75" had been at last wheeled into position. The men stood close to the gun, awaiting word from Chester.

"By Jove!" said Stubbs to Hal. "Whose idea was it to pick that red-headed man to fire the first shot?"

"Chester's," returned Hal.

"Then I have Chester to thank for doing me a favor," declared Stubbs.

"But what difference will that make to you?"

"Great Scott! Can't you see?" demanded Stubbs.

Hal shook his head negatively.

"Why," exploded Stubbs, "just think of a picture of that fellow, with a story about his red hair, his Irish ancestry, and his fiery disposition, spread all over the front page of the Sunday *Gazette*. Think of it."

"Wouldn't it make just as good a story if the man's hair were black?"

"Hardly. There are a lot of men with red hair, of course, but they are scarce, after all, when you come to consider the number of men in the world."

"Well, maybe you're right," said Hal, "but keep your eyes open. He's about to fire."

It was true.

O'Shea stood close to the big gun, awaiting only Chester's command to touch off the gun.

"Ready!" cried Chester.

"Fire!"

"Boom!"

The great French gun, aimed and fired by an American hand, sent a shell hurling through the air into the trenches of the foe.

There was no means of telling, of course, the result of the shot, but a tremendous cheer carried the length of the trenches, as American and French troops alike realized that the United States at last really had got into the war. The cheering continued for fully ten minutes, and while the Germans in the opposite trench could not make out the cause, they must certainly have realized that some momentous event had transpired.

O'Shea was lifted upon the shoulders by others of the American forces, who paraded with him about the trenches. When he was set down again, a

French noncommissioned officer approached, and threw his arms about him.

"I say!" cried O'Shea. "What's the meaning of this? I don't want any man making love to me."

He shoved the Frenchman aside good-naturedly.

At that moment Stubbs approached him.

"I desire to shake your hand, sir," said the little man.

O'Shea looked at him a moment, and then smiled.

"Well, all right," he said, and extended a hand.

Stubbs wrung it heartily.

"Now," said the war correspondent, "I would take it as a favor if you would tell me your name."

O'Shea told him.

Said Stubbs then:

"Do you have a small photograph of yourself that I can have?"

"What the deuce?" exclaimed O'Shea. "You don't mean you want it as a souvenir? You are no soldier. What are you then?"

"Besides," said Stubbs, "I wish you would tell me how you felt when you fired the first shot of Uncle Sam's war on the Kaiser—what your sensations were—something that will make a nice little story for the New York *Gazette*."

"Oho!" cried O'Shea, "a war correspondent, eh? Well, I'll tell you how it felt when I fired the first shot. It felt deuced good. I'm sorry I don't have it to do over again."

"Good," said Stubbs. "Now about that photograph?"

"You can go chase yourself," said O'Shea. "What would I be carrying photographs around with me for? Anyhow, I'm not over here to get my picture in the paper. I wouldn't give you one if I had it."

"Well," said Stubbs, "maybe you can give me an address in New York where a *Gazette* man may be able to get a photograph, seeing that you don't have one with you."

"Look here, little war correspondent," said O'Shea; "I've told you you can't have a photograph. Now go away and let me alone."

"But I tell you," began Stubbs, "I've just got——"

For answer, O'Shea picked Stubbs up in his arms, and gently tossed him in the direction of Hal and Chester, who stood conversing with several French officers.

Stubbs struck the earth close to their feet. Hal glanced about quickly.

"Why, hello there, Stubbs!" he said. "Rather an unceremonious way of interrupting a conversation, don't you think?"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ALARM

Stubbs got to his feet. He gazed angrily at O'Shea, who stood looking after him. There was loud laughter from others who had seen Stubbs go flying through the air.

In spite of their apparent innocence, Hal and Chester also had seen Stubbs come sailing toward them, and while they had not overheard the little man's conversation with O'Shea, they, nevertheless, realized that Stubbs' present predicament was undoubtedly the cause of too great familiarity with someone.

The French officers with whom they conversed were, however, greatly surprised as the little man struck the ground close to them. They started back.

"Mon Dieu!" said one.

"This is a great gang you have here," said Stubbs angrily, as he brushed the dust from his clothes. "Here I was trying to do a man a favor, and this is what I get for it."

"What kind of a favor, Stubbs?" asked Chester.

Stubbs explained.

"No wonder," said Hal. "I don't believe I would

care to have my picture plastered all over the New York *Gazette* either."

"It wouldn't be plastered there," expostulated Stubbs. "It would be neatly placed, and would make an attractive page. But this O'Shea seems to be all swelled up over the glory of firing the first shot. I wouldn't use his picture now if he gave it to me. I've half a mind not to even mention his name."

"Oh, no, you haven't, Stubbs," said Hal.

"I haven't, eh? Why haven't I?"

Stubbs was growing angrier.

"Well, in the first place," said Hal, "Andrews would probably recall you if you didn't mention it. All the other correspondents will use the name, so you'll have to do it, too."

"Well, I'm not sure about that," declared Stubbs. "Maybe I will and maybe I won't. But I'll tell you right now, I don't think a whole lot of that man O'Shea."

"I guess O'Shea is not worrying a whole lot about what you think of him," grinned Chester.

"And I'll tell you another thing," cried Stubbs. "I didn't see you, but I wouldn't be surprised if you put him up to it. It's just like one of your tricks."

"I assure——" began Hal.

"You don't need to assure me of anything," declared Stubbs, with rapidly mounting anger. "You can believe me or not, but if I had thought you and

Chester were in these trenches I wouldn't have come here to save my life."

"Your job, then?" suggested Hal.

"The job can go hang if I've got to fool around where you boys are to hold it," declared Stubbs positively.

"Just for that," said Hal in a low voice to Chester, yet making sure Stubbs would overhear "the next time he gets in a tight place we'll stand by and let him get out the best way he can."

"That's the way you have done in the past," shouted Stubbs. "I never knew you to lend me a helping hand—either one of you. You'd stand by and see me bumped off without compunction."

"Bumped off, Mr. Stubbs?" questioned Chester.

"Oh, you know what I mean. I mean killed."

"Come now, Mr. Stubbs," said Hal, let's not talk of unpleasant things like being killed. It makes me feel somewhat squeamish."

"So it should," said the war correspondent, "and you can bet your last cent that I'll never raise another hand to save you. I'm good and mad this time, and I mean what I say."

"Stubbs," said Hal, "you may be mad, but I'll give you my word I don't know what it's all about."

"Don't, eh?" sneered Stubbs. "Guess you didn't set that man O'Shea on me, huh?"

"Certainly not."

"Certainly not!" exploded Stubbs. "Did you hear

that? 'Certainly!' You've got a nerve to stand up here and use that word to me."

"You mean you don't believe me, Mr. Stubbs?"

"Of course I don't believe you. Why should I?"

"I'll show you," said Hal, stepping forward.

Stubbs gave ground.

"Here, here!" he cried. "Can't you take a joke? Of course I believe you. If you say you didn't, you didn't, and that's all there is about it."

Hal stopped.

"I'm glad you've come to that conclusion, Mr. Stubbs," he said. "I don't allow any man to question my veracity."

"I wasn't questioning it," Stubbs mumbled to himself. "But every man has a right to his own opinion."

"What's that, Stubbs?" demanded Hal, stepping forward again.

"I said I knew you wouldn't tell an untruth," said Stubbs hastily, moving back.

"Well, that's better," said Hal. "Now, Stubbs, if you will follow me I'll show you to our quarters, where you may make yourself at home during your stay here."

"Don't you worry about me," said Stubbs. "I'll get along some way. To tell the truth, I'm not sure it's at all safe in your quarters. You're liable to wake up in the middle of the night and take me for a German and then it will be good-night, Stubbs."

"Of course, if you'd rather, you may spend the night in the open," said Chester at this point.

"Oh, no, I'll go with you," said Stubbs hastily.

The boys led him to their quarters far beneath the ground. Stubbs sat down.

"The only trouble with this place," said Hal, "is that the Germans have mined under it."

Stubbs sprang from his seat as though shot.

"This is no place for me," he declared.

"Hold on!" said Hal. "The Germans are not going to blow us up."

"Suppose they'll tip you off when they get ready to explode the mine?" said Stubbs sarcastically.

"Not at all," returned Hal. "But we have the German trenches mined as well, and I have a French officer's word that when the time comes we will beat them to it."

"His word may be good enough for you, but it doesn't satisfy me," declared Stubbs. "Is this the safest spot you could pick out?"

"It's a good as another," replied Hal, "considering that the German trenches are only ninety yards away."

"Ninety yards," exclaimed Stubbs. "You mean to tell me I'm sitting here talking, with the Germans only ninety yards away?"

"Exactly, Mr. Stubbs."

"Well, I may be crazy," said Stubbs, "but I'm not as crazy as you would have me believe."

"Stubbs," said Hal, "didn't I tell you I allow no man to question my veracity?"

"I'm not questioning your veracity," said the war correspondent, "and about one minute from now you won't question my common sense. If the Germans are only ninety yards away from this trench, I'm going to hunt me a new place to sleep and eat."

"It's about the same distance all down the line," said Chester.

"Then I'm going to get out of line. When a man gets to be my age he's bound to have accumulated some sense. I'm no fighter and I'm not getting paid to fight; so I'm going away from here."

He strode toward the door.

"Well, if you won't stay you won't," said Chester, "but remember you are always welcome here. Call again, Mr. Stubbs."

"Not if I can help it, believe me," replied Stubbs, and disappeared.

Hal and Cehster had a good laugh.

"He's not half as much afraid as he would have us believe," said Hal.

"Of course not," Chester agreed. "Suppose he went to file his dispatches."

"That's about the size of it. He's liable to be back before long."

The remainder of the day passed quietly enough, with only occasional firing from either trench.

"Not much excitement here," said Hal, as the

two lads made their way to their quarters about 8 o'clock, after making a round of their position.

"No," said Chester, "but I'm not convinced that something won't happen soon. As I said before, when two armies get this close together there is bound to be something doing sooner or later."

Chester was a good prophet.

He had been asleep possibly an hour when he was aroused by Hal.

"What's the matter?" he whispered.

"Don't know," was the reply. "Enright here woke me up. Said he thought he saw Germans clambering out of their trenches and heading this way." Enright was the man—a private—whom Chester had lent a hand when he refused to go "through the mill" some days before.

"I'm sure of it, sir," said Enright.

Chester led the way above. Enright aroused the others, and the little company of Americans got under arms.

Chester peered above the top of the trench.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE RAID

"HERE they come!" cried Chester.

He dropped to the ground.

Through the little holes in the trenches the Americans had levelled their rifles. They covered the advancing enemy, who, in spite of the fact that they were now less than forty yards away, could barely be discerned in the darkness.

There was no moon and a fog covered the field.

"Wait until you can see them!" Chester ordered.

The Germans approached silently and swiftly. At a distance of less than twenty-five yards they became distinguishable to the men in the trenches. The enemy advanced calmly, apparently secure in the belief that their approach had not been discovered.

Suddenly Chester gave the command.

"Fire!"

Instantly the rifles of the Americans crashed in a single volley. This was closely followed by another and still another.

Other parts of the trenches now became alive with men, as French and the remainder of the American troops rushed forward to lend a hand.

Instead of halting at the first volley, as Chester had believed they would, and then retreating, at the

crash of rifles from the trenches the enemy hurled itself directly upon the trenches. Up they clambered in such force as to outnumber the Americans in that particular part of the trench, and then dropped inside.

Instantly rifles ceased to spit fire as the Americans hurled themselves upon the foe with the bayonet.

But the enemy, when they hit the ground, also stood with fixed bayonets, and the first desperate charge of the Americans was beaten off.

An American dropped to the ground. A German bayonet had pierced his throat. This was Private Thomas E. Enright, of Pittsburgh, Pa. He was the first American soldier to give his life in the battle for freedom and world democracy.

Enraged by their companion's fall, the Americans hurled themselves forward with a shout, and the fighting again became hand-to-hand.

With the greatest courage the single company of Americans charged the superior number of Germans, and such was the fierceness of the onslaught that the Germans gave ground, though slowly.

Now and then a revolver cracked, but for the most part the fighting was done with cold steel.

Chester found himself opposed to two big Germans. He parried a bayonet thrust with his sword, and as he did so the second man stabbed at him. At that moment a soldier flung himself between

Chester and his second enemy, thrusting with his bayonet as he did so. The thrust went home, but before the man could recover his balance, another of the enemy had pierced him with a bayonet.

The American soldier slipped gently to the ground, and as he did, he exclaimed:

"Lick 'em, lieutenant! Chase 'em out of here, sir!"

The second man who had gone down from a German bayonet thrust was Private James P. Gresham, of Evansville, Ind.

Chester had no time to answer Gresham, nor did he have time to stoop and lift the man out of harm's way. He was still too closely pressed by the foe.

Now reinforcements came dashing toward the struggling men from the American end of the trenches. Soon additional French troops arrived.

The Germans began to give ground. Realizing that the night raid had not been a surprise, and that now, with the whole trenches springing to life, to linger was to meet certain death, the German commander ordered a retirement.

The Germans again sprang to the top of the trenches and disappeared rapidly beyond. The Americans gave chase.

Among others who sprang to the top of the trenches, preparatory to leaping down in pursuit of the pursuing foe was Private Merle D. Hay, of Glidden, Ia. He gave a cry of triumph as he stood

erect on the trench top, and then tumbled to the ground to rise no more. A German bullet had pierced his heart.

He was the third man to lay down his life for his country. He would not have had it otherwise.

With a shout the Americans leaped from the trenches and pursued the enemy into the darkness.

Forty yards from the French and American trenches, the Germans made a stand. A volley of rifle shots greeted the pursuers as they advanced. Several men staggered but none fell.

Before the enemy could fire again, the Americans were upon them. Once again cold steel was brought into the play, as the Americans dashed quickly forward to prevent the foe from firing another volley.

The Germans had prepared to meet the shock, but when the men crashed together the desperate earnestness of the Yankee troopers was too much for the Teutons.

"They are devils!" cried a German officer. "They are afraid of nothing."

It appeared that the German officer was right. It was the first time he had encountered an American fighting man and he was unable to understand this sort of opposition from raw troops.

Other troops now issued from the German trenches to the support of their hardly pressed friends, who, though still outnumbering the Americans, were being forced back steadily.

More American soldiers left the trenches to support those engaged. The French, too, dashed forward.

For almost half an hour the battle raged in the open between the opposing trenches. Neither side was able to open with artillery for fear of injuring friend as well as foe; so the men fought on.

It appeared for a few minutes that the engagement might become general rather than the usual outcome of a trench raid. More and more troops left the shelter of the trenches and advanced.

Each minute the Germans were drawing closer to their own trenches, as the Americans and French hurled themselves forward without allowing them a moment's breathing space.

Hal and Chester had been in the midst of the battle—where the fighting was thickest. Hal had received a thrust through his left wrist, from which blood streamed. A bayonet had pricked Chester's breast, but the lad's revolver had disposed of the weapon's owner before it could penetrate to his heart.

Suddenly, at a sharp command, the German line broke and fled.

The Americans would have given further pursuit, had not a French bugle sounded a recall at that moment. In spite of their three years' experience, Hal and Chester still had considerable to learn. They undoubtedly would have given chase to the

foe had it not been for the clear notes of the bugle.

Instantly Chester shouted:

"Back to the trenches quick, boys."

The others did not understand the reason for this command, when what they believed was a glorious victory was within their grasp, but they were good soldiers. They obeyed instantly.

There was a grand rush for the protection of the trenches. But they had delayed too long.

As the last German climbed into his own trench, German batteries of rapid firers swept the field. They were turned first, it chanced, in the direction where the French troops were retreating, and they reaped a harvest of death among the retreating Gauls.

Then the guns swerved upon the Americans. A dozen men dropped. The others would have turned to lend them a hand, but were not permitted to do so.

After this salvo of artillery fire, German troops again issued from the trenches under the cover of darkness, and feeling secure now, advanced to where the wounded and dead covered the field. The wounded they took charge of and carried to their own trenches. Among these were an even dozen Americans.

They reached their own trenches again just in time, for, fearing a resumption of the attack, the allied guns, now that the men were back in the

trenches, swept the intervening spaces and the great guns hurled shells into the German lines.

The Germans returned the fire shell for shell. The fighting became a duel of great guns at long range. Life was comparatively safe in the trenches again.

CHAPTER XXIX

TAPS

Captain O'Neill summoned his subordinates and ordered an immediate report of casualties. They were found to be as follows:

Three Americans killed.

Five wounded.

Twelve missing.

The dead had all been in Company H, led by Hal and Chester. Three of the wounded were in the same company, but the missing had been members of Company K. Whether they lay dead or had been captured, the American officers at that time had no means of telling. It developed later, however, as we have already seen, that the twelve men reported missing had been carried safely into the German lines, where they would be held as prisoners of war until the great conflict ended.

Of the losses of the enemy, the Americans had, of course, no means of telling. An even two dozen were found dead in the trenches and many more were picked up badly wounded. Hal and Chester knew, however, that others of the enemy had fallen while the struggle was at its height in the open. Therefore, it could be plainly seen that the Americans, with what little aid had been given by the

French, had been victorious in the first engagement of the war in which the Yankee troops had been called upon to play a part.

It was the morning after the unsuccessful German raid. American troops stood about the trenches hats in hand. In the center of a group of officers three forms lay cold in death. These were the bodies of Privates Enright, Gresham and Hay, the only Americans who had laid down their lives in the cause of liberty since the United States had taken up her share of the world's task of disposing of the German Kaiser and Prussian militarism.

The bodies of the three young men had been carefully dressed. The wounds that had caused their deaths had been washed and cleaned. They were clean shaven. In death they appeared to be smiling at the thought that they had not been found wanting when they had answered the call of the country they loved so well.

The officers stood about with uncovered heads. Captain O'Neill was speaking and the others gave him respectful attention.

"The names of these three young men will go down in history," said the captain quietly. "They are the first to give their lives for their country; and the country is proud of them. Their bodies will not be allowed to rest here under an unmarked grave, where the feet of an enemy may pass above them. They shall be sent home to their mothers,

that they may be given fitting burial—and that the nation may extend to them the honor and glory that is their due.

"It will be a sad home coming, but you know and I know that the mothers of men like these will not let sadness and grief overcome the knowledge that their sons are heroes. When the first pangs of grief have subsided, they will be proud; and why shouldn't they be proud?

"Could these three mothers, years ago when they rocked their little babies to sleep in their arms, have dreamed to what untold heights those babies would rise? Of course not; and yet here they are, and the nation will see that they are laid to rest with just honor and glory. It will be hard on those who love them, but will not these, too, share in the glory?"

Captain O'Neill became silent. Hal and Chester eyed him in some surprise. Neither would have believed that behind the rough exterior of this fiery Irish captain lay such a degree of sentiment; and yet it did much to endear him to them.

As Captain O'Neill's words implied, it was not expected that the bodies of the three youthful heroes would be buried in foreign ground. Uncle Sam had made arrangements to take care of his own. Those who fell on the battlefields of France would, where it was humanly possible, be carried back to the land of their birth.

As Captain O'Neill ceased speaking, two of the companions of the three heroes approached with three large American flags. These they wrapped gently around the bodies. Captain O'Neill spoke again.

"They will be honored when they reach home," he said quietly, "yet I would have them honored here."

He signaled to Chester, who had been in command of the troop of which the dead men had formed a part. He spoke to Chester in a low voice. Chester summoned a file of soldiers.

These approached the bodies of Enright, Gresham and Hay, and, at a command from the lad, fired a volley over the body of each.

It was "taps!"

It was a sad party that accompanied the bodies of the three young Americans toward the rear, from where they would be sent to Paris, and later back to the United States. Chester headed the party and Hal went with him. This duty accomplished, the lads returned to their positions.

It proved that Captain O'Neill had spoken truly when he said a nation would pay fitting tribute to its dead. Wherever the bodies reposed on their way back, sad-faced crowds paid them honor; and that their deaths had not been in vain was evinced by the fact that, at the news of their fall, enlistments throughout the United States increased by leaps and

bounds. The American nation was determined to avenge its loss.

Later, however, the French government asked that their bodies remain on the soil of France, and there, at last, they were laid to rest, while the highest officials delighted to pay them honor; and there is no means of telling how many of their old companions and cronies before swearing allegiance to the Stars and Stripes first pledged fealty to the dead.

Following the German trench raid, things became unusually quiet in that part of the long battle line where Hal and Chester were stationed. The days passed slowly without a recurrence of the attack. Nor did the Americans, for a time, attempt to retaliate on the foe. There was some talk of striking a blow at the foe, but it was not delivered within the week that followed.

Several weeks later the first American troops in the trenches were ordered out. Others took their places to receive their baptism of fire. It became apparent that the Americans, in spite of the fact that they had proved themselves under fire, were not to be given important strategic positions to hold until they had been put through a thorough course of seasoning.

Hal and Chester killed time as best they might. The gloom occasioned by the first American losses pervaded their company for some days, but it fell

away at last and the men became as light-hearted and as care-free as of yore.

One day, as the boys were strolling about, they beheld Anthony Stubbs approaching. They greeted him with pleasure.

"Where have you been all these days, Mr. Stubbs?" asked Chester.

"Oh, just looking about, looking about," returned the war correspondent.

"Where were you when the Germans raided our lines?" Hal wanted to know.

"Well, I wasn't very far off," declared Stubbs; "not as far as I would like to have been, to tell the truth. And yet, now I am glad I was near. It was a gallant action, boys, and I was close enough to see the details, so that I later was able to do my part toward telling the nation of the heroism of the men who died out there in front of the German trenches."

"But when you left us, you said you were going to hunt a safe place," Chester protested.

"Well, so I was, but I got interested in a conversation with a French captain. When he offered to show me about, I stuck. So I was on hand when the enemy attacked."

"Stubbs," said Hal, "you're a queer duck."

"What's that?" demanded Stubbs. "Duck, am I. Now I don't know what I ever did to you to call for an epithet like that."

"I didn't mean it as an epithet, Stubbs," said Hal. "You're just queer; that's all. You talk like you are scared to death all the time, and yet whenever there is danger near you are always to be found in the midst of it."

"That's part of my job," said Stubbs quietly.

"What's the use of fooling around with an old newspaper?" demanded Chester, "when you can get a gun and get into things with interest?"

"I'm not a fighter when I can help it, Chester," declared Stubbs. "You know that. To tell you the truth, I've a horror of attacking a man. I don't believe I could stick a bayonet into a man any more than I could fly."

"You'd find you could if he was about to stick you with one," said Chester significantly.

"Perhaps," said Stubbs, "but I'm not even sure about that."

"I am," declared Hal.

"Well," said Stubbs, "I will have to leave you, boys. I've some dispatches to file. I'll see you later."

He strode away.

Half an hour later, when the lads returned to their quarters, they found an orderly who informed them that Colonel Beauregard desired them to report at once to General Pershing.

"Something up, Hal," said Chester.

"Looks like it," agreed Hal.

They made their way toward the general's quarters.

Here we shall say good-bye to the two lads temporarily. They were to have still more exciting adventures with the American troops than have been recounted in this volume, and these adventures will be found in a succeeding book to be entitled: "The Boy Allies with Haig in Flanders; or, The Fighting Canadians of Vimy Ridge."

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